

[See page 226

A CLOUD OF YELLOWISH FLAME THAT EXTINGUISHED ITSELF WITH A
DETONATING "BOOM!"

THE GREEN C

A HIGH SCHOOL STORY

BY
J. A. MEYER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXII

P27
M 5717
G.

COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY HARPER & BROTHERS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED OCTOBER, 1912

K-M

1.25
©Cl. A327635

TO
THE AUTHORS
OF
THE AUTHOR

CONTENTS

| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|--------|---|------|
| I. | THE GREEN C | I |
| II. | WHAT IT MEANT | 17 |
| III. | ON BEING A GOOD SPORT | 33 |
| IV. | THE PRIDE THAT GOETH AFTER A FALL | 50 |
| V. | THE HERO | 64 |
| VI. | THE HEDGELEY GAME | 79 |
| VII. | THE YELLOW STREAK | 95 |
| VIII. | THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD | 113 |
| IX. | A QUESTION OF ACTORS | 128 |
| X. | THE HOLIDAY | 145 |
| XI. | THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR | 162 |
| XII. | THE NEW GAME | 182 |
| XIII. | GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE | 198 |
| XIV. | EXPERIMENTS | 215 |
| XV. | THE WAY TO THE C | 232 |
| XVI. | JACK'S LUCK | 245 |
| XVII. | THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK | 263 |
| XVIII. | THE FORGOTTEN NOTE | 278 |
| XIX. | THE LAUREL | 293 |
| XX. | THE RACE | 308 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

A CLOUD OF YELLOWISH FLAME THAT EXTINGUISHED

ITSELF WITH A DETONATING "BOOM!" *Frontispiece* ✓

HE SCRAMBLED UP ON THE SILL *Facing p. 40* ✓

"GEE!" EXCLAIMED JACK, ADMIRINGLY, "YOU'RE

BLEEDING!" " 102 ✓

HE SEEMED TO APPROACH THE SHORE BY INCHES " 274 ✓

THE GREEN C

THE GREEN C

I

THE GREEN C

JOHN HATHAWAY DOWNING, more conveniently known to his friends as just Jack, was engaged in plastering down his curly hair straighter than any law of nature intended it to go. He was conscious of his best suit, new boots, and his oldest tie. The best suit was his mother's decree, since that used on ordinary occasions was no longer ordinary. His new shoes were an unfortunate accident, but the old tie was masterly diplomacy on the part of Jack himself; and the torturing of his yellow curls partook of this design, for Jack was bent on making himself look natural and every-day, with the overwhelming odds of new boots and Sunday suit against him.

To-day was the day of Jack's matriculation into Cleveland High School, and together with

THE GREEN C

a hundred and thirty-two other new boys he was trying to get through this important event with as little notice as possible. One may graduate with wreaths and the presidential salute; but one enters school, high school, or college humbly, like a thief in the night. So Jack and the rest of the hundred and thirty-three were donning ragged neckties with their best suits, and bestowing more attention on their hair than ever in their lives before, endeavoring to acquire the carelessly dressed appearance of a third-term student worrying about exams.

From down-stairs came the voice of Edith, Jack's junior by a year, a happy child still in the sheltering arms of the old red grammar-school which had cast him forth last June.

"Jack-ee! Aren't you coming? You'll be late for school!"

"High school," corrected Jack, with some heat, then swallowed hard. He wasn't proud, only, if one suffers for a name, at least let him be permitted to bear it.

"Jackie," called Jack's mother, "do you want any help?"

"No, ma'am." Jack's indignation rose. To be dressed by one's mother to go to high school! It had the effect of putting an end to his attack on his hair, so he went down

THE GREEN C

to the dining-room with the front of his head smooth and several shades darker than the back, which, in contrast, seemed puffed up like the down on a very young chicken.

Mrs. Downing scarcely looked higher than his neck.

"What kind of a tie have you got on? And your collar! Didn't you put on a clean one?"

Obviously he had not.

"Hadn't time—first I could get hold of," mumbled Jack. "Oatmeal? Where's the sugar?"

"You're not going out in that dirty collar!" exclaimed Emily, the oldest of the Downing family, very wise at nineteen.

"Yes, I am. I haven't time—"

"Then you should have got up in time. You deserve to be late. Mother, aren't you going to make him change that tie?"

But Jack had gulped down all the necessary food, and was commencing to search wildly for his cap. Edith was creating a draught by swinging the front door, and added her pressing inquiries to the confusion:

"Jack-ee! *Are* you coming?"

"Really, Jackie, that collar—" protested Mrs. Downing, trying not to laugh; but Jack, having found his cap, cut short her objections with his rough, boyish good-by kiss.

THE GREEN C

"It's all right, Mom; I don't want to be late. First day, you know! Pop gone?"

"Yes; good-by. Be good."

The door slammed, and Emily was staring at the smile on her mother's face.

"He's messed your hair," she announced, severely. "I think you should have insisted about his collar and tie. What will the boys think of him, or the teachers?"

Mrs. Downing shook her head and smiled even more.

"They would be more likely to notice them if they had been clean and new," she said.

Jack, meantime, left Edie at the corner, a very short walk. Edie, who was not occupied with the emotions that made Jack's progress a march to the battle-field, noticed how particularly short that walk was, and how proportionately far away from the corner where she left her old comrade the Grammar School seemed to have grown. She felt homesick and prone to tears. Jack seemed a different Jack who would not need her any more in that strange new world of his.

Among all those that sauntered up the hill to the great yellow-brick high-school building Jack beheld no familiar face. The town was a large one, supplying about twenty

THE GREEN C

public schools, and from Jack's only eight boys out of those who graduated intended to follow up their education at Cleveland. These eight were easily missed in the crowds. In fact, Jack beheld none but the happy students of upper classes greeting each other with cheers and calls, chaffing questions and personalities.

Then panic descended upon Jack as to which door he was to use. Plainly he was with the wrong group. Perhaps there was some strict etiquette concerning entrances.

"Say," he spoke, in a quaking treble, with a swagger of assurance that he hoped might stamp him as a junior at the least, "which door do the freshmen use?"

The boy addressed, a tall, stoutish lad who had been lounging against the brick wall, gazed for some seconds at Jack, then pointed down the street.

"Down there. Turn the corner and you'll find a little path leading to a door. It may be locked—all the freshies are in—but keep on hammering till they open."

"Thanks." Jack liked his serious manner, and when the other raised his cap with a flourish, saying, "Oh, don't mention it at all," he flushed scarlet and clumsily raised his own cap and wondered if his abrupt mode

THE GREEN C

of address had not seemed boorish. Here, indeed, were different customs from the free and easy life of grammar-school.

Cleveland High School and its grounds covered a large square, and with the warning that the freshman door might be locked uppermost in his mind Jack broke into a trot. On the other side of the building he found an iron gate leading to the little path, and the door beyond it was closed. Farther down was another entrance, with boys crushing in, and for one reckless moment Jack decided to follow them, pretending he was an upper classman. He was deterred, however, by the thought of where this fraud might land him—visions of class-rooms filled with indignant hosts bent on punishing him for his liberty. He knocked politely at the door before him.

The crowds surging into the entrance beyond thinned as he waited. He realized that it was growing later and later. He knocked again without gentleness and, after a slight pause, once more with growing force. The door was jerked away from under his upraised fist, while a red-faced woman stood in the opening glaring at him furiously.

“What in the name of Hivin is this, now?” she cried, wrathfully. “Is it thricks ye’re at

THE GREEN C

already, an' the school not yet more than claned an' opened its dures. Go lang out of this before I get Dr. Hall after ye, ye brazen little imp, ye. Don't ye hear me at all?"

"I thought—" Jack stood frozen with horror. The door banged in his face, and the noise woke him to action. He fled across the green September lawn to the other entrance, and was the last of three to scuttle through as the bell sounded somewhere, shaking the soul of him with fear.

Moreover, some one had him by the arm.

"If I catch you runnin' across my lawn again, young feller, Dr. Hall will hear of it. What's your name?"

"Downing—Jack Downing," stammered Jack. The grip loosened.

"You're new, so I'll let you go this time; but don't try it again, because next time I won't be so kind."

His captor, a man in a grimy black cap and stained overalls, went out again into the bright sun. Jack ached to follow and escape from that long, vacant, cement-floored corridor, with its ghostly sound of hidden voices and invisible footsteps, its complicated iron stairways, and the mysterious closed doors that lined the walls.

In his worst dreams nothing like this ever

THE GREEN C

had happened to Jack. He could not have been lost more completely in the Desert of Sahara, and certainly nowhere could he have been so lonesome as he felt there in the empty hall of that great building filled with audible but unseen beings.

Into the depths of his misery, while he stood wondering which way to turn, and whether he dared turn at all, there descended an angel in a once-white sweater with a large green C on the chest. It is doubtful whether Jack would have had the courage to accost this individual had not his deliverer spoken first.

"Freshman?"

"Yes."

"You belong in Crandall's room. Two flights up, room thirty-five. You'd better beat it before the second bell rings."

"Thanks." Jack said it from his heart, and made for the nearest stairs without delay. From the iron framework of the stairway he saw the white sweater making its blissful way down the halls. Afterward, when the big school became his home as much as the little room under his father's roof, Jack often gazed through that very grille down the familiar hall and recalled with wonder the bitter homesickness and envy that had filled him this first time.

THE GREEN C

He found Room No. 35 one of a number of doors in a hall such as he had left, only that it was lighter. He knocked and entered, and the sight of the Irish face of one James Miskell sent tremors of delight all through him. In school he had seen very little of Miskell, and had never bothered to see more, yet here that pleasant, homely face seemed beautiful as a haven after a stormy passage. He did not look for the other seven boys from his school; Miskell sufficed.

"Well?" said Crandall, from the desk in the front of the room. He was a young man with thick glasses, and a habit of expecting order so convincingly that he generally got it—especially from freshmen.

"I was told to come here, sir. I'm a freshman, sir."

"So I see. Do you intend taking French or German?"

Immediately Jack beheld Miskell undergo what looked like an attack of epilepsy, but which really was an effort to signal to him matters of great importance. It reminded Jack of a game of "London Bridge is Falling Down."

"That boy." Crandall rose majestically. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, sir. I just wanted to let Down-

THE GREEN C

ing know he wants to take French," answered the resourceful Miskell.

A giggle broke over the class. Crandall smiled, and the giggle grew to a laugh. Crandall frowned, and the laugh died away.

"You should have arranged your programme in private," declared Crandall. "And now," he turned to Jack, "having received this gentleman's interesting communication, do you feel more competent to decide?"

Had Jack had Teutonic aspirations of the keenest, he would have cast them all aside for that coveted seat beside the hitherto unappreciated form of Miskell.

"French, sir," he said, as the second bell rang.

"Put your name, school, parent's name, and address on there, and then take your place on the line. Class stand!"

A few seconds later Jack and Miskell were crushing each other's fingers as they stood together on the line; then Miskell directed Jack's attention to two other graduates from their school who were surreptitiously welcoming him to their midst.

"The rest," whispered Miskell, "took Dutch."

They marched into "chapel," a secular room

THE GREEN C

so large that the freshmen on the rear seats could scarcely hear the voice of Dr. Hall. When they returned to the class-room a new instructor took charge of them, an angular person named Stockton, a man who had a damning reputation for sarcasm, yet was well liked, especially by the classes that had passed through his fire and gone on.

At last came a moment of liberty, when tongues were freed, and Jack told all his adventures to Miskell.

"And, say," concluded Jack, "there was one thing about that chap—the one that sent me here, that I did like awfully. He had a big green C on his sweater."

"Did he?" asked Miskell. "What was that for?"

"Don't you know the name of your high school yet?" asked Jack, scathingly.

"Oh, for Cleveland."

"No, for a Clever Boy. That's the way they rate 'em here. You'll have a D on yours for dumb," retorted Jack, sarcastically.

"That's a swell stunt," nodded Miskell, flushing. "Only don't you think it's kind of showy? After all, we aren't Harvard or Yale."

"Well, I like being patriotic anyway. We're important here, just as much as the

THE GREEN C

big colleges are important to the country. And *I'm* going to buy one," announced Jack, decisively.

"I don't know, it's sort of sissy, isn't it, marking up your clothes like that?" ventured Miskell, conservatively.

"Huh, wait till you see the feller you've been calling sissy," grinned Jack. "I'd love to see you do it to his face."

The relentless bell cut off all further argument.

At lunch-time Jack and Miskell kept together like two aliens in a foreign land. In that one hour they learned more of each other's character and habits than they had found out in the six years of daily association in the grammar-school, where half the classroom, and the fact that they belonged to different "gangs," interposed to block their friendship.

"I thought you were a kind of a snob," confessed Miskell, at the crest of confidence.

"I imagined you were sort of tough," responded Jack, with equal frankness. And in the comradeship which began thus it is doubtful whether they ever re climbed those heights of intimacy reached during the surge of that first hour's loneliness and mutual dependence.

Toward the end of the lunch period they

THE GREEN C

ascended the iron stairs in a leisurely fashion and regained their room, where they found books being distributed. A boy named Cartwright, in the seat in front of them, went through his books systematically, while they opened theirs at random, exclaiming in awe at the intelligence they were expected to acquire to master the mysteries they found.

"Better see there are no pages missing in your books," advised Cartwright, turning around. "A feller that went to school with my brother flunked because he never found out that six propositions were missing from his Euclid till he got them on an exam. and couldn't recognize one of them."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Jack.

"What's Euclid?" asked Miskell, who had no scholastic pride.

"Geometry." The patronage in Cartwright's tone was so subtle that it was almost imperceptible.

"How'd he miss all that in class?" asked the practical Jack.

"He used to cut a lot." Cartwright smiled in a knowing manner. "Do *you* get everything that goes on in class?"

Jack wondered whether this was a reflection on his ability to apprehend or a veiled compliment admitting him to the genial

THE GREEN C

brotherhood of anti-grinds. While he was figuring it out the very boy who had rescued him in the hall entered the room in all the glory of his patriotic sweater, carrying a heavy load of books.

"Look," he nudged Miskell; "there he is."

"That's Graham," volunteered Cartwright. "On the football team. He was a freshman when my brother graduated, but my brother predicted he'd make the team even then. Look at the size of him!"

"I like his sweater," said Jack. "That's a slick idea, that C on it."

"A slick idea?" Cartwright caught him up, quickly. "Don't you know what that means?"

"No," grinned Jack. "I think it stands for Cauliflower."

"No, really," repeated Cartwright, "*don't* you?"

"What I know about it"—Jack assumed his best oratorical manner—"is that it's a shame every boy in this place isn't wearing one."

Cartwright stared at him, then flopped back in his seat in a most exasperating way.

"Oh, you poor nuts," he murmured, sympathetically. "You *don't* know. Is it your

THE GREEN C

intention to blossom out with one?" he inquired of Jack, who need not have been very bright to perceive the poison under the honey in his voice.

"I guess you know what I intend to do," returned Jack, wishing he had an equal confidence in himself.

"Do you know what would happen to you if you did wear one?" demanded Cartwright, fiendishly. Jack had to proceed cautiously. There was no telling when Cartwright might begin to "string" him. He decided on an assumption of burlesque as his safest course.

"Sure, you'd be expelled," said he.

"No, but you'd wish you had been." Cartwright had to concede a hint in his pride of his own wit.

"You bet you would," nodded Jack, emphatically.

"Do you know why Graham wears one?"

Miskell felt it was time to interfere.

"Maybe he got a hundred per cent. in something," he suggested.

The bell for the commencement of the afternoon sessions and the advent of the instructor cut off Cartwright's uproarious laughter, and gave Jack a much-needed breathing-space. But a note was slipped onto his desk that puzzled him exceedingly,

THE GREEN C

and set his uneasiness to work anew, for there is no game so nerve-racking as riding ignorance with the bridle of pretense.

"My brother had a C when he graduated. I'm going to get one, too."

For an instant Jack hesitated over the thought that the letter might be a hereditary institution to which he had no claim, being the first of his line at Cleveland. Then he decided to take a long chance. Turning the paper over, he scribbled his reply on the back of it, unconsciously and in ignorance registering his first collegiate vow, that was to make this year for him something more than the first year of high school, that was to make his career at Cleveland something more, too, than an aimless shuffling through a maze of marks.

Cartwright, unfolding the note that Jack passed him, read with the little superior smile that Jack hated:

"So am I."

Then he crushed the paper and thrust it out of sight in his desk, as the class was called upon to form a line to march to the next study in another room.

II

WHAT IT MEANT

ON his way home Jack spied Edie waiting for him at the gate, and he experienced a thrill of pride in his own growth since he had left her that morning. Doubtless she was there to learn of his first day's adventures and to see how he had fared. He wondered if he showed for the broadening of his mind. He felt, as never before, the difference in their ages—indeed, she seemed more than a year younger. The fact that she awaited him so eagerly touched him and filled him with a desire to be kind to her and help her, out of his vaster experience, to avoid difficulties that had beset him in his youth. He waved back to her, and saw her make signs for him to hurry, which he pretended not to understand. It was right she should be anxious to hear his story, but he realized that to preserve his dignity with the fullest effect the recital must come from him nonchalantly, as if it were somewhat of a bore.

THE GREEN C

To this end he loitered, so that Edie, in an ecstasy of exhausted patience, left the gateway and ran down the street toward him.

"Jackie!" she called. "Hurry, and you'll have a chance to ride over to Marshfield in an automobile!"

Two emotions fought within Jack: the fall of his pride, and joy in the prospect of motoring.

"What kind of a car?" he asked, determined to show no enthusiasm.

"A great big red one," answered Edie, with feminine lucidity; "but if you don't hurry they'll be gone."

"Who?" Jack quickened his steps, and they trotted down the street side by side, while Edie panted out the essentials.

"Some men. One's going out to stay with Professor Marshfield for a while to make experiments or something. The other owns the auto. And there's another man running it. He's the handsomest—"

"That's all girls think of." They had reached the porch, and the front door opened under the hand of Mrs. Downing.

There were two men in the hall, one with a neat little beard and queer tortoise-shell glasses attached to a black ribbon; the other, in full motor regalia, a tall man with a short

WHAT IT MEANT

mustache and a touch of gray in his hair that deceived Jack in regard to his age.

"We're forced to ask you to guide us over to a place called Marshfield," said this latter, whom Jack's mother had introduced as Mr. Carrington. "Do you know where it is?"

"You bet I do," answered Jack, promptly, and grew scarlet when they laughed.

"You're the man for us, then," said the bearded one, in what Jack thought was an affected voice, but which really was the King's English as the King of the English speaks it.

"Come on, then. I'm sorry, Mrs. Downing, that we must rush off like this; but if I'm to leave Sanford at Marshfield's and get back to the city to-night, I must be starting."

"I understand, Mr. Carrington."

"I'll see you when I drop this youngster on the way back. I hope Bob will be home then, so I may get the chance to say hello to him."

"My husband will be very sorry if he misses so old a friend."

Meantime Emily had descended upon Jack, in the background, to inquire into the state of his hands. She was horrified at the result of her investigation, and they had come to a point in an argument between them when Jack raised his voice high in protest.

THE GREEN C

"But you've got to have dirty hands in an automobile!"

"Certainly, certainly," interrupted Mr. Carrington, laughing. "I fear you don't understand these masculine affairs. And washing takes up so much precious time."

They all bustled out chatting and laughing. Jack felt himself borne along on the tide which stripped him completely of the years that had been his barely five minutes ago, that turned him into a very young boy, so young that he did not know enough to resent it.

He sat back in the great red leather-cushioned seat beside the chauffeur, and hungrily eyed the glittering levers and the strange wheels and pedals to his right. He had prided himself on knowing every make of car that passed his house; but here was a new one for him, by its size and looks important enough for him to know. He was ashamed of his ignorance. If he had been asked the question he had put to Edie, his reply would have been no more intelligent than hers. He flushed at the thought.

But he had little time to worry about this drop in his self-esteem. In a very few minutes they had completed the delicate task of backing out of the curved, narrow

WHAT IT MEANT

roadway without annihilating the garden with those giant, clumsy wheels, and were on the highway waving good-by to the little group on the porch.

Jack had made several bicycle trips to Marshfield, a matter of perhaps fifteen miles. It was rather a section than a town, with few houses other than the cottage and laboratory of Professor Marshfield, whence it derived its name, and some large farming estates. These latter, with their attractive apple orchards open to the raids of any boys who chose to invade them, accounted for Jack's familiarity with the geography of the vicinity. The thought of these apples came to Jack while he sat alert in his seat peering importantly through the wind-shield, as they sped on with gaining speed, and his exulting heart gave an extra leap. High school seemed very far away, yet pleasant to think back to as part of this full day. He pictured himself telling Miskell of this ride, which reminded him to ask a leading question of the chauffeur.

"What make auto is this?"

The chauffeur grunted something he could not understand, and a glance at the unsmiling profile forbade the repetition of his query. Jack determined to look at the hubs when he alighted. He knew it was a fine model by

THE GREEN C

the smoothness and quiet with which it ran.

Presently some of the beloved orchards flashed into view and drove other matters from his mind. Then Jack discovered that it was utterly impossible to make a simple suggestion that they should stop and gather the fruit. As each new orchard appeared in the distance Jack made up his mind to speak; but, though the car ate up the long roads swiftly, his courage ebbed even faster, and tree after tree was left behind untouched. Through it all, however, Jack had the exhilarating feeling that next time he might manage to say the fatal words. Once he did exclaim in the most natural manner:

“What fine apples we’re passing! Say, they make you hungry to look—” But just here he caught sight of the freezingly immobile face of the chauffeur, and it had the effect of unnerving him completely. He felt a qualm of anger against Edith, whose disloyalty had found that villain handsome.

His duties as guide were very light. Once they struck the road there was only one fork where they could have gone wrong, and it was there that Jack covered himself with confusion. He was busy thinking of the apples they were passing and the chauffeur’s un-

WHAT IT MEANT

happy disposition, so he mistook the meaning of this latter's glance and succinct "This?" and nodded back to him pleasantly, feeling that this action would best propitiate the grim god of the wheel. The truth only dawned upon him after they had gone several yards down the wrong prong of the fork, and his smitten conscience caused him to announce the mistake more vehemently than necessary.

"No!" he almost shouted. "I didn't mean that! We're wrong!"

The jolt of the car from the none too gentle application of the brake nearly threw him into the ditch; but it did not upset him half so much as the sight of the muscles hardening on the chauffeur's cheek, a sign Jack did not mistake for joy at his blunder.

The two inmates of the tonneau, however, were cheerful enough over the error, and Mr. Carrington tried to put Jack at his ease.

"You let us do that to show us how easy it would be to miss the road if you weren't along, I suppose," he suggested. "Very sagacious, and we appreciate the lesson."

Of course now apples were a dream of the past, and Jack felt sure that if his enemy, the chauffeur, knew of a way of throwing him out of the car without wrecking the

THE GREEN C

whole party and losing his job he would have put it into practice.

Some of Jack's self-respect returned when he pointed out the insignificant-looking residence of Professor Marshfield, and heard the two passengers exclaim that they never would have gone there in quest of their object had he not been along.

"You've saved us a lot of valuable time, son," declared Mr. Carrington, genially. "That would have been the last place I'd have thought to stop."

This was balm to Jack's soul, especially as he knew the chauffeur could not very well help hearing it.

Jack stayed with the car when the two men went in to see Professor Marshfield. He did not relish the arrangement, but he was not given his choice. The chauffeur got out and commenced to examine the tires and the gear under the car, and poked about with a wrench and an oil-can in a way that fascinated Jack and thrilled him with a desire to get down and watch, especially as it was not often that he had the chance to be on such intimate terms with a motor-car. But the recollection that the chauffeur might be preparing a means of blowing up the car, now that he was alone in it, led him to scorn

WHAT IT MEANT

to appear to retreat from what was a distinctly disadvantageous and dangerous position.

After a while the foe, satisfied with tightening a few nuts and oiling a few joints, put away his tools and proceeded to walk up and down humming a little tune, which unorthodox conduct on the part of the villain hurt Jack more than the most destructive explosion his imagination could conceive.

Fortunately, Jack did not have long to wait for the return of Mr. Carrington. For the first time Jack saw Professor Marshfield at close range, a small, rather stout man with attentive, penetrating eyes.

"The Professor says when you're out here on your wheel some time, you may stop off and he'll let you get apples," announced Mr. Carrington to Jack, who turned red with memories. "We haven't time for them this afternoon, so we'll just thank him and depart."

"Come again, come again," said the Professor, cordially, "and I am indebted to you for bringing Mr. Sanford out here. I hope we shall be able to send you good news of the results of our work together." He shook Mr. Carrington's hand very warmly, and Mr. Sanford followed suit, then waved to Jack.

THE GREEN C

Mr. Carrington suggested that, now they had become acquainted with the road, Jack should share the rear seat with him, so that they might become acquainted with each other, and Jack hid his shyness and complied. They started back in the rich glow of the late afternoon.

"I've never lost the feeling that I'm a truant for not going back to school in September," said Mr. Carrington, "and I'm being paid for all the time I didn't want to go by wanting it now and being unable. You get lonesome for it this time of year, no matter how old you are—at least I do."

"I can't imagine my getting lonesome for it," grinned Jack.

"It doesn't last, of course. You have your business to attend to, and that fills your time."

"I was a little lonesome for grammar-school this morning," conceded Jack, seizing this opportunity of setting Mr. Carrington right on certain matters.

"You're at high school, then?" Mr. Carrington looked on him with obvious respect.

"What year?"

"Freshman."

"How do you like it?"

"It's all right." Jack hesitated, for here

WHAT IT MEANT

was a chance to make inquiries on the subject nearest to his heart. "Did you go to college?"

"Yes."

Jack wrestled with false pride and won.

"What does it mean when you wear the letter of your college on your sweater? There's a chap there says his brother had one, and he's going to get one, too. Can you get it like that—in families?"

"No"—Mr. Carrington did not laugh—"you have to win them."

"How?"

"Athletics. You get them for playing on the winning team in any game, like football or baseball, or you can win 'em sprinting or swimming, or jumping or putting shot. Different schools and colleges have different rules. Probably there's a book you can get at your place that tells you just how to go about it."

"Thanks." Jack glowed. "Can you start when you're a freshman?"

"You can't start too early. I wouldn't advise you to go out for football unless they have a freshman team; but there are lots of things you can do. Can you run?"

"I've never tried," answered Jack.

"How about trying out for the baseball team?"

THE GREEN C

"I can pitch pretty fair," said Jack. "I could practise it up."

"It seems to me you have a good show of getting a letter, then. But look here, there's one thing I've got to preach about, and that's this. Your letter has got to mean more than just excelling in athletics to you."

"You mean lessons?" Jack grew visibly glum. He had heard these sermons before.

"Not only lessons, though I mean them, too," answered Mr. Carrington, at which Jack became interested. "Something harder than lessons. A letter ought to mean that you're a good sport. Do you know what that is?"

"A feller that won't give in when he's beaten," hazarded Jack.

"Not by a long shot. It's the chap that plays the game as though his life depended on it, but wins or loses it as though he didn't care. A good sport doesn't crow and doesn't whine, and when there's any doubt as to whether a point in the game belongs to him rightly he always gives up cheerfully. He does the difficult thing when he might get off by doing the easy one. He may not always do the right thing; but if he ever gets into a mess, he won't crawl to get out. And the best sport in my college didn't win his letter."

"How was that?"

WHAT IT MEANT

"He was a sprinter, and the night before the meet his room-mate was taken sick. He attended to him all night and ran the next day without mentioning a word about it. No one would have found out to this day why he lost if his room-mate hadn't told. It was his last show, too. You see, we had to win three races before we could wear our letter. He had won one. Afterward he ran in another and won it, though it made no difference about the letter."

"Why did he run, then?"

"He was asked that, and he said he got 'personal enjoyment out of doing his best.' He was a queer duck, and when the boys weren't thinking he was foolish they were admiring him tremendously. Some day when you read *Don Quixote* you'll understand. The noblest things in the world have been called silly. But here's a way of judging. Find out if you are doing a thing because you want to gain something by it, or because you think it's the right thing to do. Then remember it isn't what you get, but what you deserve, that counts. Understand?"

"Sort of," answered Jack, vaguely.

"You will when you're up against it and have to choose the hard thing to do," nodded Mr. Carrington.

THE GREEN C

"You think I ought to try for my letter just for the trying, and not to care too much whether I get it or not?"

"That's about it. A pretty large order, eh?"

"You bet." Jack sat silent, thinking it out, and Mr. Carrington watched the serious young face and smiled.

"I don't entirely see how you can do it," announced Jack, at last. "Because if you don't care—"

"It's the difference between working to do something real and worthy and working for pay. Your letter is only a sign that you've been paid for your work," answered Mr. Carrington.

"Yes, I see now. It's what you know you are, yourself."

"You've hit it." Mr. Carrington looked satisfied. "Now let's cut out the moral instruction, and tell me what your high school is like."

Before Jack knew it he had launched into a vivid description of that first day, the over-courteous upper-classman who had purposely misdirected him, the irate janitor, the big student who was the first to show him the coveted green C. When he told about his joy in meeting Miskell, and marveled on how

WHAT IT MEANT

strangely friendly they had become in one day, Mr. Carrington related to him a remarkable story of two enemies who met in a town that was far away from their home, and their homesickness turned them into boon companions.

The familiar street on which his house was situated appeared all too soon, and as Jack looked around at the landmarks he knew so well he had again the same thrill of having changed, of being a different boy from him who had gone by them last.

When Mr. Carrington had left him on the Downing porch, and had again made the perilous backward tour of the driveway, Jack stood watching him, feeling that he was bidding adieu to a friend.

It was not till after dinner that night that the excitement produced by the two visitors abated enough to let Edie inquire of Jack the details of his high-school career up to date. Gradually he told her all about it, and when they were alone in the library, the others being in the parlor entertaining curious neighbors who had seen the red motor-car, he told Edie of his intention to get a C.

"What does it mean?" asked Edie.

"It means," answered Jack, filled with noble dreams—"it means you are such a

THE GREEN C

good sport that you won't care if you don't get it after all."

He need not have looked so superior to Edith when she shook her mystified head helplessly. He could say the words glibly enough; he might even have interpreted them very cleverly for Edie, but it would take several stern and bitter lessons before their full understanding would be driven home to him.

III

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

JACK had some skill in pitching, as he had confided to Mr. Carrington. But he realized that if he intended to make his C on the diamond he must get into training and work. It's one thing to play ball with boys in a vacant lot, and another to win a place on an organized high-school team. This Jack admitted to Miskell, together with the fact that to learn properly he must secure a good ball. Miskell was inclined to agree with him when Jack attributed his mediocre pitching heretofore to the inferior material he was forced to use. The best ball, the ball on which Jack had set his aspirations, cost exactly one dollar and a quarter, which meant that it would take five weeks of absolute starvation on Jack's allowance to acquire it. Edie, like all girls, had managed to save out of her weekly money; but her twenty-three cents was of no use to Jack, even had he been willing to take the loan she offered.

THE GREEN C

One day Miskell came to Jack with the news that he had found some one who knew a Junior named Barnes who was willing to sell his slightly used League ball for ninety cents; but, in the unfortunate state of Jack's finances, ninety cents was scarcely more possible than the full price. Jack, in discussing it with Edith, had a mind to mortgage his income for the next four weeks.

"They'd never let you do it," declared Edie, decisively.

"Well, if they were so much against it, they'd give me the four weeks' money in advance. I'd be satisfied with ninety cents instead of a dollar if they did that." Jack was encouraged by Edie's silence at this. He did not know it really was due to the fact that she was receiving a practical lesson in discount, which she felt she never had understood till now.

"No," she said, at length, returning from mathematics to ethics, "that wouldn't do, either. It begins with a sort of falsehood. But I'll tell you, I'll speak to mother about it and see what I can do."

And the next night Edie triumphantly presented Jack with a square box containing a baseball from his mother.

"We were out shopping, and I told her

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

how much you wanted one, and that you were going to try to save up for one. So she bought this. And do you know, Jack, I hate to say anything like this about any boy, but some one was trying to cheat you. This is a brand-new ball, and it cost only a quarter, and it's a good one, because we saw others there that looked the same for five and ten cents; but we would not take them." She glowed over her bargain; but Jack could not respond, neither could he reply. He felt it was impossible to explain these things to women. He decided that he would quietly return the ball to the shop, get back the quarter thrown away upon it, and use the money to swell his capital of five cents, saved toward purchasing the real one.

Next day Miskell came to him in excitement to say he had offered Barnes sixty cents, and the offer had been considered and accepted, provided that Miskell could collect the sixty cents. Also he, Miskell, had earned an unexpected quarter the night before from an affluent uncle who paid one for running to town for cigars. So, Miskell concluded, an idea had come to him to form a company with Jack for joint ownership in the ball, Jack putting up his thirty, bringing the total to fifty-five cents, if Barnes would sell at

THE GREEN C

this price. And, of course, Miskell added, his share in the ball was to the amount of his investment, which was not quite half. Jack generously offered that as commission on the transaction, which Miskell finally accepted. Barnes grudgingly lowered his price. Later they discovered he had seriously been considering an offer of thirty-five cents from a classmate.

The ball had been slightly more used than either of them had anticipated, but they professed to find this an advantage. Every one knows that no ball is at its best till it is "broke in." They managed to brand their names on the cover fairly legibly, "J. Downing" for Jack, while "J. M." had to do for the junior partner, since burning initials on a dirty kid sphere with a red-hot pen-knife loses its zest after the fifth letter.

One afternoon it was Miskell's misfortune to be detained after sessions for levity in chapel, a misdemeanor in which, for a wonder, Jack had not been involved. Jack promised to wait on the "campus," as they called the school-grounds, until the instructor felt Miskell had contemplated the seriousness of his offense sufficiently to discipline himself more strictly in the future. It appeared to take Miskell rather long to come to the proper

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

frame of mind, and Jack amused himself by tossing their ball high into the blue September sky and catching it, pretending to himself that he was fielding for his school team, and putting out man after man on the opposing side by catching all their most disconcerting flies.

Suddenly at a doorway some distance away appeared the figure of the boy who had helped him in the hall that first day, big Graham, with his white sweater and the coveted C that had begun to mean so much to Jack.

Now, one cannot show how well one can pitch by throwing a ball straight up in the air, and Jack felt this a good opportunity to let some Cleveland athlete see that he had the makings of a sensational pitcher in him. Intending to send the ball with astonishing force up against the brick wall of the building, and running in, and to catch it on the rebound, Jack let fly.

Perhaps it was the presence of so powerful a man as Graham that inspired Jack; he himself tried in vain later to imitate that most thrilling and unexpected out-shoot. It was a marvelous bit of pitching, but, unfortunately, badly placed. No one was more amazed at the result than Jack, for he had dashed forward expectantly before he realized that there was to be no rebound. With the jingle of

THE GREEN C

flying glass the ball had completely vanished.

Jack's knees bent under him, his jaw dropped, and he stood thus waiting for something to happen.

"It's all right," said a quiet voice behind him. "You didn't break the window, whatever else got smashed. The window was open."

Jack looked up into Graham's face, wherein a desire to laugh was mingled with real concern for the unlucky freshman.

"What 'll I do?" gulped Jack.

Graham considered.

"First, come back here out of the open where you can watch the window till I get the hang of it. There's nobody in there, or you'd have seen a head popping out long ago."

They stood partially concealed behind a ragged box-tree while Graham reckoned up what room had suffered from the bombardment.

"Kid," he said, solemnly, at the conclusion of his calculations, "you couldn't have done better if you had tried. That was the chem laboratory, and if the building doesn't blow up in five minutes I advise you to skip in there quietly and get back that ball as quick as you can. It's best for all parties that they should think the cat did it."

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

Jack turned white.

"Do you really think there might be an explosion?" he asked, in a hoarse voice.

"It depends on what sort of chemicals you've let loose together in here."

"Gee!" gasped Jack. "Miskell's in the building, too."

But five minutes passed without any appreciable change in the landscape, and at the end of the time Graham permitted Jack to venture the recovery of his property. The door to the laboratory was locked, however, and it was with quaking heart that Jack returned to the campus, where he found Graham still waiting.

"Got it?" asked Graham, cheerfully.

"The door was locked," answered Jack.

"That's funny. They must have forgotten the window was open. Well, it's lucky for you that old Peyton and Stapleton weren't dawdling round in there as they generally do. Still, there's no telling when the janitor will get wise to that window. You've got to do some hasty burglar work. Are you game to let me boost you in?"

"Sure," replied Jack.

"Come on, then, and keep your eyes open."

They crept stealthily toward the window. If Jack had not been rather unnerved at the

THE GREEN C

reality of their danger, he would have been more impressed with the romance of it. Once, it is true, the thought of Edith's scared eyes, when he should tell her about it, gave him a flash of satisfaction, instantly quenched when Graham stayed him with a touch on his arm, whispering: "Hush! Do you hear any one in the room?" It was a false alarm, so Jack climbed up on Graham's broad back and cautiously viewed the scene of the catastrophe.

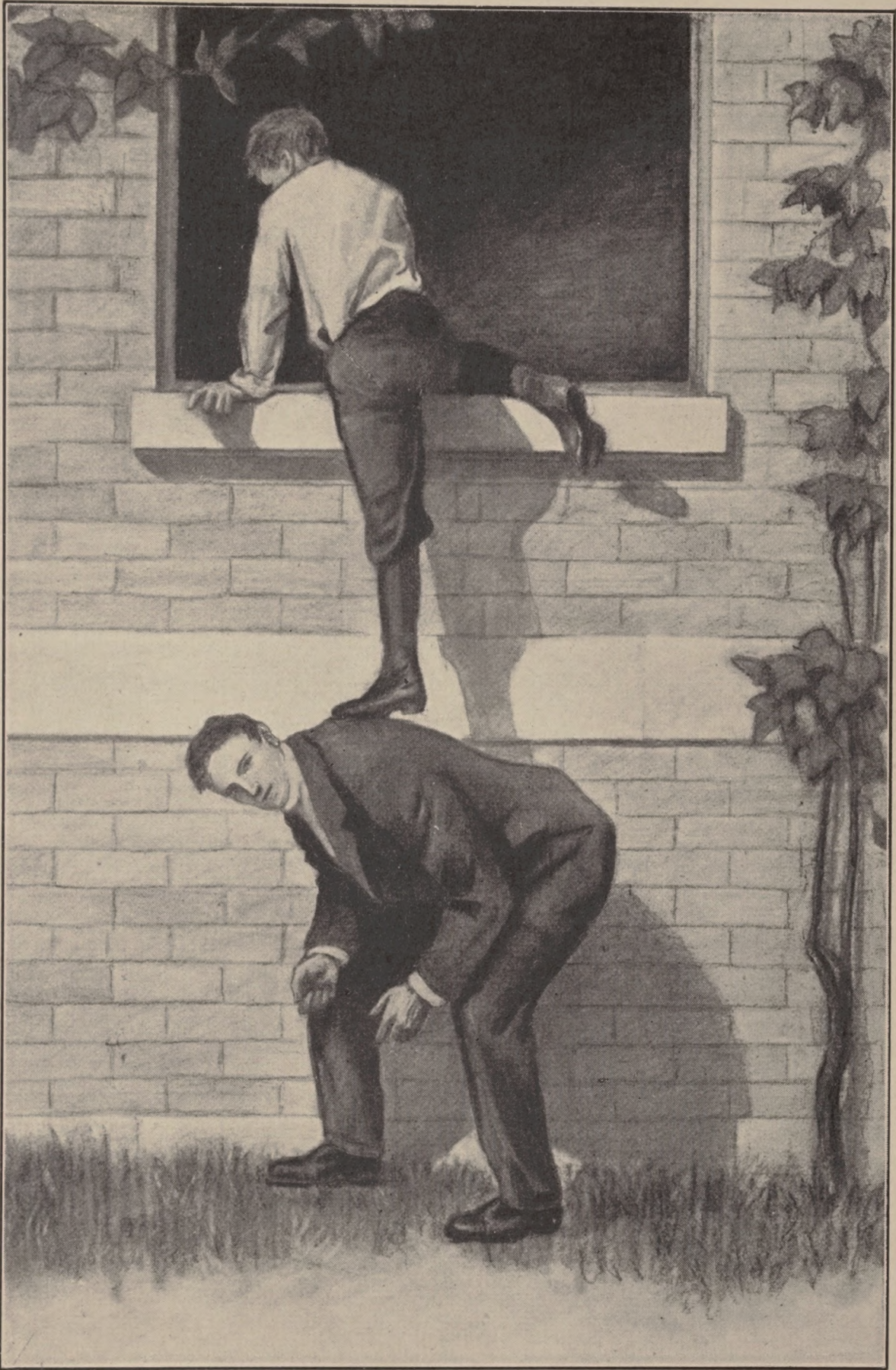
"Take a good look before you get in," warned Graham, softly. "It wouldn't be much fun to land right in Stapleton's loving embrace."

"It's empty," reported Jack. "Great Cæsar's ghost! What a mess!"

He scrambled up on the sill, from which he let himself cautiously into the room.

"I'll hang round to see that you get out safe," said Graham. "Whistle if you need me, two shorts and a long."

Jack nodded and turned to examine the room. It was a small laboratory used by the professors of special classes in advanced chemistry. It was furnished chiefly with a couple of tables, their zinc tops stained and corroded, some dusty wooden shelves, and a row of large sinks, in which stood pans and jars filled with liquids of various colors,



HE SCRAMBLED UP ON THE SILL

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

whence ascended unsavory odors. Bottles of all sizes and shapes crowded the shelves, disputing their places with dilapidated books. Strange mechanical contrivances, photographic plates, electric cells, and wooden boxes containing empty glass vessels that looked as though they had been crippled in the making, stood about on the floor or tables, or among the books and bottles on the shelves. A Bunsen burner was overturned on one of the tables, and on the floor lay the remains of what had been a rather large retort, the contents of which now decorated the cement floor in eccentric designs. In the midst of this wet chaos lay the ill-fated ball. Jack hesitated, fascinated by the disorder he had managed to make, remarkable even amid so much disorder, and as he stooped a faint, malignant odor assailed his nostrils. He picked up the ball gingerly, and the odor became almost overpowering. He wondered if he were about to die from poisonous fumes set free by his own recklessness. He stood waiting to be suffocated; but, when it did not happen, moved softly toward the window.

Suddenly something in the guilty position of his body, as he slunk along the wall, struck him disagreeably, and, utterly un-

THE GREEN C

bidden, the thought of Mr. Carrington flashed upon him. Was he *crawling*? It occurred to him to wonder what a teacher would think, entering and finding him in this attitude. He stood still and tried to reason clearly and sensibly. How, for example, would Mr. Carrington think it out?

“He’d probably say, if it was my luck to smash up things, it’s my luck to take what’s coming to me for it. But that’s hard on me. I didn’t mean to do it. Things just went wrong, by accident.”

Of course, it was all an accident, and who would deliberately go and demand punishment for something he could not help? If there were any law involved that he had broken. . . . Dimly he was conscious of some rule he had heard against playing baseball on the school-grounds. Was that only in grammar-school, or was it here as well?

If there were such a rule, he knew his ignorance of it would not help him. The matter was serious; it might involve expulsion. He clutched the ball tighter and moved nearer the window. The sound of footsteps outside brought him to his knees on the floor, hiding behind a table. Crouched thus, he started again toward his means of escape. Then he stopped and stood bolt

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

upright with burning cheeks. No need to wonder what constituted "crawling" now. He despised himself utterly!

It was natural now for him to go to the other extreme. Perhaps it did seem foolish for him not to take his chance and escape when he had the ball, and he could get away so easily; but Mr. Carrington had warned him that the right thing often looked silly, and had spoken in praise of those who scorned to use the easy way. Jack seemed to swell with joy at his own regeneration. The time had come, as Mr. Carrington had predicted, when he was "up against it," and he had the chance to show himself to be a good sport. Surely if this misfortune were worthy of expulsion, sneaking out of the consequences sunk him even lower. The first was pure accident; but the second would be cowardly design. Whatever he got, he determined he would not deserve worse.

He felt he had grown several inches taller while he was deciding thus, and it was with a flourish, though there was no one there to see, that he took out his fountain-pen and blotted his partner's initials from the ball, being careful to leave his own name clear to the view. This required something besides moral courage, for he was not sure how the

THE GREEN C

fluid in which the ball had been drenched would respond to a treatment of ink.

At last, leaving the ball carefully on the spot from which he had taken it, his head aching from the intolerable odor of the mixture he had upset, Jack made his way upright and empty-handed to the window, and waving gallantly to the figure of Graham in the distance, he placed his hand upon the sill with no vestige of caution, and vaulted out upon the soft grass beneath. Even as he did so Miskell appeared from a door near by, and watched his spectacular exit with stony amazement.

Graham went up to Jack anxiously.

"What happened? Couldn't you find it? You've been a terribly long time!"

Now, in the open air before the eyes of Graham and in the presence of the approaching Miskell, Jack became conscious that his exaggerated sense of honor was beginning to seem absurd. Mr. Carrington had warned him that these matters appear foolish to others, but had neglected to arm him against the discouragement of finding them foolish himself. Jack began to wish inwardly that he had been less heroic.

"No." He lied shamefacedly. "I couldn't find it."

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

"What's the matter?" asked Miskell, running up at this point. "What were you jumping out that window for?"

"He pitched his ball into the laboratory, and it got lost," answered Graham. "Did you do any damage?"

"Yes, a big glass thing filled with some awful stuff. It's given me a headache." Jack looked it.

"Oh, cricky!" cried Miskell, excitedly. "What do you suppose they will do about it?"

"I don't know."

"Is the ball in there yet?"

"Yes."

"Great Scott, it has my initials on it—and your name!"

"Your initials—I got ink on them, and they don't show," stammered Jack, who, not being well up in lying, found the details of the game hard to master.

"The ball has your name on?" repeated Graham. "What do you mean?"

"We burnt it on, in case the ball got lost or swiped," explained Miskell.

"Is it easy to make out?"

"Sure—dead easy."

"And you came out of that place without it?" Graham turned on Jack.

THE GREEN C

"It smelt so in there," apologized Jack, his face flaming. "I couldn't stand looking for it."

"Then look out of the way." Graham backed up for a running jump toward the window. But suddenly Jack's faith in himself returned. He and his conscience had put up too good a fight to give in now.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded, standing in Graham's way. "You mustn't go in there."

"Look out! I'm going after that ball. You'll be in a fine mess if they find it with your name on it."

"Don't!" Jack held him back eagerly. "The janitor will catch you—and the stuff I upset is fearful. It's poison; it almost killed me, and it's getting worse all the time."

"All the more reason why we've got to get the ball," was the dogged answer. "Let go; the longer you hold me back the better chance I have of getting caught."

He broke away from Jack, and in another minute had crossed the lawn and landed skilfully on the window-ledge. But Jack was close behind him, and now hung on to him desperately by the foot.

"Listen, please listen," begged Jack, forced into the truth at last; "I *did* find the ball."

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

"Where is it?" Graham was not to be fooled.

Jack shook his head hopelessly.

"I didn't bring it out with me. I—decided—it was—squarer—to leave—it—in there."

Graham nearly fell down on top of him.

"You *what!*" he all but shouted.

"Really. You can see it from where you're sitting. I blotted out your initials, Miskell, so that's all right," Jack added, quickly, to Miskell, who stood staring incredulously.

"You mean you *want* to leave it there?" asked Graham.

"Yes—yes—yes!" Jack's courage returned threefold. Open argument gave him strength.

"Do you know they may expel you for this?" Graham still sat on his uncomfortable perch, and tried to reason with the mad young freshman.

"I don't care!" To his horror, Jack found his lips trembling, and he was seized with a terrifying desire to cry. "Please leave it there. I want it to stay, and I'd ten times rather be expelled than be a sneak."

"A sneak!" repeated Miskell, dazed. "Is it a sneak to want your ball back when you've lost it? It was my ball, too, and I want my half of it."

But Graham had heard the tremor of sin-

THE GREEN C

cerity in Jack's voice. He had dropped to the ground beside them.

"No," he said; "you'll get it when the time comes. And if the kid wants to leave it there, it's going to stay there. And say"—his hand fell heavily on Jack's shoulder as that person stood with bent head—"I don't know what put you up to all that foolishness; but, by gum, I bet there's a lot more sense behind it than you'd think. You're all right, whether you're crazy or not." And he strode away shaking his head and chuckling to himself in evident delight.

But however much pleasure Graham got out of the situation, Miskell and Jack stood shrouded in gloom, Miskell being even more miserable than his companion, having no sense of martyrdom to buoy him up.

"Say," he said, at last, "it's really as much my ball as yours. I ought to be expelled, too, if you are. You had no right to blot out my initials."

"You didn't do the pitching," returned Jack. "I'm not going to be expelled for owning the ball. It's because I couldn't steer it. But it sure was a wonderful curve! I wonder how I did it!" Jack eyed the scene of the late tragedy with ill-suppressed admiration. "Just look, I was standing over here when I did it."

ON BEING A GOOD SPORT

"I'd like to have seen it," said Miskell, warming up.

"You didn't *see* anything. You just heard things breaking." Jack shuddered. "Come on, let's get away from here, and don't say anything about this till to-morrow, anyway."

"I wish I understood you," burst out Miskell. "You just calmly threw up the sponge when everything was going your way. It was so easy!"

"That's it; it was too easy. And I didn't understand till it just happened. Misk, a man told me that it isn't what you get, but what you deserve, that you've got to worry about. If I get kicked out for something I couldn't help, it isn't half so bad as feelin' I ought to be kicked out for bein' sneaky."

"Oh, but this is only—" Miskell was unable to say what.

"Let's quit talking about it," said Jack, impatiently. "It's done, and I'm glad of it. Only I wonder—"

"What?" asked Miskell, hopefully.

"I kind of wonder if I'd ever be able to do it again."

But whether he was referring to his wonderful throw or his moral victory, Miskell was unable to tell, and dared not ask.

IV

THE PRIDE THAT GOETH AFTER A FALL

“WHAT’S the matter, Jack?”

Edie had been watching Jack furtively for some time, ever since their parents had gone out and Emily had left them alone while she entertained a guest in the parlor.

Jack now started up and clutched at his Latin home-work.

“Why?” he asked, in his most natural tones.

“I don’t know”—Edie was at a loss; “you’re acting sort of queer. Don’t you feel well?”

“I’ve got a headache,” answered Jack.

“Headache? That’s from those horrid cold lunches. I don’t see why they don’t give you time to come home to eat as we do.” Edie was obviously quoting more maternal lips.

“Well, you’re mistaken. It’s not from that at all; it’s from something entirely different.” There was a note of triumph in Jack’s voice.

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

"From what?" Edie showed marked lack of conviction.

"Some stuff that was upset in the chemical laboratory. It smelt horrible."

"Poison?" Edie at last looked impressed.

"I suppose so."

"I think chemistry ought to be abolished," declared Edie, hotly. "I don't see any sense in it. Did you get any over you?"

"Just a little, on my fingers."

"Where?"

"You can't see it." Jack himself had searched for it in vain.

"How could they be so careless as to upset anything like that? Who did it?"

Jack looked uncomfortable. "It was just an accident," he said.

"It was very stupid for them to permit accidents. The teacher—"

"The teacher wasn't there," broke in Jack, exasperated.

"And they let a lot of boys in the chemical laboratory without a teacher?" cried Edie, aghast, taking some pleasure, however, in having got over "chemical laboratory" so fluently.

"There weren't a lot of boys in there." Jack was losing his temper.

"Jack"—Edie sat up and looked at him

THE GREEN C

sharply—"did some boys go in there when they had no business to, and upset things they had no right to touch?"

"There wasn't any one in the room when the poison upset," was the prompt answer.

"You needn't be afraid to tell me the truth, Jack," said Edie, reproachfully; "you know I never tell. Or just say," she added, sorrowfully, "that you don't care to tell me any more, since you go to high school and I'm only in the grammar. But don't try to lie to me."

"I'm not lying!" snapped Jack. He tried to return to his Latin, but Edie's eyes bored through his most studious pose.

"Did you upset that poison?" asked Edie, finally, in a voice so solemn and sepulchral that it sent a shiver down Jack's back. Then he looked straight back at his sister, and gave her as good as she had sent.

"Yes," he said, defiantly; "I did."

"Oh, Jack"—the tears welled in Edie's round eyes—"how could you have told me a story, then, and said there wasn't any one in the room?"

"There wasn't."

"Oh, Jack—"

"Baseball." The explanation was brief but clear. Edie's sadness gave place to fright.

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

She sat stunned a moment, then managed to whisper as though there was a chance of being overheard by the authorities:

"Did you break a window?"

"No; that was open."

"Do they know you did it?"

"My ball's in there with my name on it."

"Couldn't you get it back?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you? Were you scared to go in the room for it?"

"I did go in."

"Oh, then it was that dreadful poison?"

"No."

"Then"—Edie began to grow bewildered—"couldn't you find the baseball?"

"I had it in my hand."

"And you left it there! Why on earth—"

"Because I wanted to."

There was a long pause.

"Did somebody find you there?" It was Edith's last guess.

"No."

"You just left it there so's somebody will find it?"

"Yes."

Edith swallowed hard and tried not to expect too much as she put the deciding question.

THE GREEN C

"Is it—is it because—because you want to own up?"

"Yes, yes—don't let's talk about it." Jack was really embarrassed by her adoring eyes, and in desperation again attacked his Latin.

"Jackie," said Edie, at last, in the voice of one in a church, "I think you are the noblest boy in the world."

Jack tried not to glow visibly under this opinion, which was a practical confirmation of one he held himself just then, so he said, gruffly:

"You won't think so when I'm expelled."

"Do you suppose they'll expel you?" demanded Edie, horrified.

"If they do," said Jack, as nonchalantly as he could, "I shall go into business. I have a pretty good business head." He was thinking of the baseball transaction. "And I guess I'm pretty honest."

"Oh, when people hear of this they'll just clamor for you to work for them," declared Edie, positively. "It's the honestest thing I ever heard of."

"After all, most of the big millionaires started in when they were about my age," said Jack. "Only," he conceded, "they weren't expelled from school."

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

"For being honest," supplemented Edie, loyally, and with unconscious satire.

Thereupon they proceeded to neglect their lessons, and held a long and grave conference on Jack's future, his prospects, his remarkable qualities. It was a very bright and prosperous career they mapped out for him, in the contemplation of which Jack mysteriously lost his headache, and they both stayed up later than they should.

Jack went to bed filled with pride and comfort. He thought up a beautiful letter to Mr. Carrington, acquainting him with the whole affair in a modest way, but came to the conclusion that there would be no excuse for this communication until he was expelled. He wondered if he really wanted to be expelled. Fair as a business life had seemed to him, he felt a homesick tenderness for Miskell and the yellow-brick building that was already beginning to take a hold on his heart. Then there was the winning of his C. He did not enjoy the thought of having to give up all that and to lay aside the thoughts of baseball forever. For Jack realized that once you are in business you are a man, and once you are a man baseball degenerates into foolish little games of one-o'-cat in the front garden or the knocking out of flies with your

THE GREEN C

nephew's ball. Decidedly life was serious and rather sad—and fortunately here he dropped off to sleep.

The next day he squeezed Edie's sympathetic hand when they parted, and he went on his way prepared in his mind for disgrace or unexpected honor. He did not know how they expelled a boy. Did they stand him up in chapel and bid him leave the place forever in the sight of the assembled students? Jack almost enjoyed the thought of his dramatic exit, when he could go out feeling he had done what only a noble few would have the courage to do.

On the other hand, he wondered if by any chance, through Graham or Miskell, or some instructor who had been an invisible witness to the incident, it might be taken up the other way and he be publicly applauded and held up as an example of a boy with lofty ideals.

Miskell greeted him with a whisper that he had seen nothing significant and heard less.

"They don't seem even to know about it," he went on. "Maybe they haven't found the ball yet. I looked at the laboratory window, and it was still open."

"So did I," confessed Jack; "but I don't think it is open quite so far. They have to

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

keep it up to get air in after the poison I upset."

"Oh, did you find out it really was poison?" demanded Miskell, thrilled.

"Oh, I'm sure," nodded Jack, "because of the headache I got from it."

The bell bidding them march to chapel struck cold terror to Jack's heart.

"What's the matter, Downing?" asked Stockton, the class teacher, startled at Jack's pallor. "Aren't you well? Do you want to be excused from chapel this morning?"

"No, thanks, sir," answered Jack.

Better be in chapel and hear the worst than stay in an empty class-room for fifteen or twenty minutes and expect it. Yet Jack almost changed his mind at the chapel door, hearing the shuffle of many feet and the martial strains of the already familiar morning march.

The hymn was sung, the daily reading from the Scriptures followed, and then Dr. Hall arose.

"Boys," he said, "I have a great honor and a great pleasure in store for you." Jack turned scarlet. He wondered if he were dreaming. He wished that Edie were there to hear. "We have among us one whose personal nobility of character has contributed much to the

THE GREEN C

bettering of this little world of ours; whose example will inspire men long after he has ceased to be." Even Jack felt he was laying it on a little too thick. "Boys, I feel sure you need no introduction to one so universally honored and beloved as the Reverend Doctor Ralph Buckminster Klink."

In the thunderous applause that followed the rising and bowing of the little feathery-haired, gold-spectacled clergyman, Jack felt as though he were about to swoon. Doubtless the Rev. Dr. Buckminster Klink spoke well, doubtless there was much in what he said, especially on the subject of humility, that would have been of lasting service to Jack, had he heard it. But while the boys around him strained to catch the words that were being poured out to them from the platform, while they laughed or murmured approval or applauded vehemently, Jack sat as one carved out of stone. At last there was another rousing clapping of hands, and the Reverend Doctor took his seat.

Dr. Hall thanked him in the name of the students, and gave the signal for a rising chord. The first strains of the march were checked suddenly. Dr. Hall again was speaking.

"One moment, please," he said. "I for-

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

got to mention one thing." Jack remained entirely unmoved this time. "Some of the freshmen do not know yet that there is a strict rule against baseball practice of any sort on the school-grounds. I do not wish to hear of this rule being broken." Jack held his breath and waited for more; but Dr. Hall merely nodded to the pianist to take up the march where he had left off, and the stamping of feet began again as the boys trailed out of chapel.

"Gee!" exclaimed Miskell, as they piled into their class-room, "do you suppose he knows about it, or was that just a hunch he got, or what?"

"I don't know," answered Jack, shaking his head gloomily. "It looks bad. They're hatching up something. Oh, say, why can't they come right out and be done with it?"

All day he lived in a state of nervous tension. Every time the class-room door opened he expected an official representative of the board of education to ask him to step aside.

Lunch-time came at last, and Jack, with Miskell as support, went in search of Graham, to find out, if possible, what had happened. A boy in Graham's class, who had humorous round eyes and hair like a door-mat, told them that Graham always went home to

THE GREEN C

lunch, and he added a suggestion as to which gates he was wont to use, that they might not miss him on his return. Jack and Miskell thanked him and proceeded to man these gates, and to Jack fell the good-fortune of sighting the big senior, swinging up the path. Graham saw him at the same moment, and smiled in friendly greeting.

“What’s happening? What are they going to do?” asked Jack, eagerly, rushing up to him.

“There’s nothing happening, is there?” asked Graham.

“No; but are they doing anything, do you think, that may happen later?” The language of conspirators is always a little incoherent.

“Not a thing. Rest easy in your mind. I went in to see Stapleton this morning. He’s in charge of the little lab, you know. Of course, old Duffy was in there with the ball as prompt as sunrise. I explained it to Stapleton, and he listened all the way through, then said he thought maybe you’d had enough punishment, and he’d regard the incident as closed. Old Duff wanted to raise a rumpus about the mess you had made on the floor, and he tried to get off some gag about getting sick from the smell of the stuff you upset;

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

but Stapey soon settled that by telling him if he could mention anything that could smell less obnoxious than distilled water he'd be interested as chemist to know of it."

"Was that water?" asked Jack, incredulously.

"Yes, they'd been double distilling it for an experiment where it had to be extra pure, and there was some left in the retort."

"Gee! And he thought it made him sick?" giggled Jack.

"So did you," returned Graham, grinning. "You forget you told me that to keep me out of the room. But Stapey says you can get a real headache from imagination, and that room is always awfully strong. Were you in chapel this morning?"

"Sure."

"Well, that was Stapey's doing, all that junk Doc Hall said about freshmen and baseballs. He thought it best to warn everybody that there are rules. You can get your ball by applying to old Duffy in the Janitor's Bower after school. So long; I've got some work to look over. Don't worry, and be glad it's the beginning of the term, when you're not supposed to be so well up on the regulations. Say, I could see Stapey liked the part about your not wanting to sneak

THE GREEN C

out with the ball when you could have done it so easy."

Miskell, the faithful, was still waiting at the other door when Jack went to look for him.

"Did you catch him? He hasn't come in this way, and we'll be late if we hang round here much longer," greeted Miskell.

"I saw him," answered Jack, "and it's all right. He told Stapleton, and Stapleton liked my going back and then not taking the ball. So he'll let me off. And that business in chapel was aimed at me. Did you know there was a regular rule against playing ball on the campus?"

"I kind of imagined it," replied Miskell, truthfully.

"Well," Jack hesitated, "I didn't exactly know. They have some awful silly rules."

This was as near as they dared get to calling the rule in question foolish in the face of what had happened. Miskell ingenuously showed the trend of his thoughts by his next query, which he put as they mounted the stairs to return to their room.

"Did he find out what you upset that smelt so awful?"

Jack looked at him sharply. For the first time he was sorry he had not inundated the building with noxious fluids.

PRIDE AFTER A FALL

"It didn't smell. It was just the stuff in the sink that gave me that headache."

"But you said—"

"The janitor thought so, too; but it wasn't," interrupted Jack. "It was just water they were distilling. But it's good the lamp wasn't lit," he added, with a gleam of satisfaction, "or I might have blown up the whole place and you with it."

But Miskell was not disturbed by probabilities that had not come to pass. It remained for him to stamp out the only spark of pride now left in Jack, as they entered the room:

"Say, I guess maybe it was because it was only water that they let you off so easy, eh?"

V

THE HERO

“GOING to the game?” Cartwright asked Jack, one morning a week or two later.

“What game?” asked Jack.

Cartwright looked duly shocked and amazed at his ignorance.

“You consider yourself a loyal Cleveland student, and you don’t know that we open the football season with Newton to-morrow?”

“Oh,” said Jack, “that—”

“I can’t understand you fellows,” declared Cartwright, warmly, “that come to school and get all the advantages and never do anything in return, and don’t feel that you owe your *alma mater* any sort of duty or respect. It’s up to us to go to all the games and root for Cleveland and make a decent showing on the bleachers. It encourages your team when they see a lot of you there yelling for them. But then I don’t suppose it matters to you whether your team wins or not?”

THE HERO

"Certainly it does," answered Jack, his face flushing, partly because of his inability to think up a more cutting reply.

"You're like all these boobs that talk a lot and never do anything," declared Cartwright, disgustedly.

"I'll do a lot more for Cleveland than you will," retorted Jack.

"Ye-ah! You'll go right in and join the football team and win a couple of games for her, without even knowing how to play," prophesied Cartwright, sarcastically. "Oh, sure, you're too clever to learn."

Jack's temper was beginning to boil.

"Say," he said, doubling up his fist, "would you like to get soaked in the eye?"

Cartwright's ambitions along this line never were stated, for Stockton entered the room at that minute and called the class to semi-order, so that they might be ready at the ringing of the bell to go down to their next lesson in another room.

Miskell had not been present at this interview, which made a strong impression upon Jack. He admitted to himself that he was remiss not to have known of this matter, but he was particularly sorry that he had not answered Cartwright's attack more effectively. He realized that he should have said,

THE GREEN C

quietly: "Yes, I am most interested in my high school, and I want to see her win, but I do not consider it loyalty to go out of my head on the subject, like *some* people." Or better still: "*I* am not conceited enough to think my rooting would win the game for Cleveland. *I* give more credit to the players." That would have been the answer, but, like all good answers, it had not occurred to him in time.

At lunch-hour he drew Miskell to a bulletin-board with a casual, "Let's see what's going on."

There, sure enough, was the green-and-white announcement of the coming game, with an elaborately drawn portrait of two automatons in rather unusual football gear, engaged in fouling each other at the immediate risk of being demolished under a rickety goal-post.

"That's right," said Jack, in the tone of one contemplating the arrival of a long-anticipated event, "the game with Newton is on to-morrow."

"Say, look at here!" exclaimed Miskell, who was reading elsewhere. "Here's a chap that's lost a pair of shoes. How do you s'pose he did that?"

"Where?" Jack's interest in athletics subsided for a minute. "Oh, gym shoes! They

THE HERO

could easily have been swiped out of his locker. Are you going to the Newton game?"

"Me!" demanded Miskell, with ungrammatical astonishment. "What would I do watching a football game when I don't know a blessed thing about it?"

"That's just it, you ought to learn."

"You can't learn by watching, unless you have some idea to begin with."

"Yes, you can. It's the only way. Besides, you owe it to your team to show some interest in them."

"Sure," grinned Miskell, "they're just waiting for my interest!"

"Every one counts," said Jack, unconsciously duplicating the very tone and words that he had resented that morning. "It's our plain duty to Cleveland to go to all the games and root for the team. It encourages them to know we're there on the bleachers yelling for them. It's the least we can do."

"Well," said Miskell, good-humoredly, "I've got better ways of spending my Saturdays than sitting on a hard bench and getting my throat sore making a noise over something I can't understand. Nix! I'll appoint you my representative, and you can go and be loyal and patriotic for me."

"I'd be ashamed to be as indifferent as

THE GREEN C

you," declared Jack, wondering why whichever side he took in an argument seemed to be the weak one. "And *I* am going, anyway, you bet."

To his credit be it said that he wavered but little when he discovered that the making-good of this resolve would deprive him of his week's money at one fell swoop. At least he could look Cartwright in the eye, and he decided to pretend that he had really been going to this game all along, and had only spoken as he had to test Cartwright's sense of humor.

The next day he was among the crowds at the gate of the football field, looking in vain for a familiar face. It seemed strange how few of his own classmates had the proper college spirit. He would have welcomed the figure of Cartwright with open arms. Moreover, all the others seemed to be in groups, or pairs at least; only he was alone, and he felt curious eyes upon him from all sides because of it.

Luckily, there was no one to demand from him an official account of the game at its close. He had a hazy idea that Cleveland had won—an opinion gleaned from the actions and remarks of the Cleveland students, decorated with streaming ribbons of green

THE HERO

and white, who sat on all sides of him. As a matter of fact, his whole attention had been attracted and held by one figure, a scrubby-haired, wiry member of his own team, who seemed everywhere at once, and to whose lot fell play after play, and all sensational. It is doubtful whether Jack would have been able to keep his eye on him so steadily in the confusing scrimmages that took place during the game, had not this player been particularly distinguished from the others by the fact that he wore no head-guard other than his own rough, characteristic, dust-colored mane. Jack remembered Cartwright had mentioned that Graham was on the team. He had come with the intention of watching him, since he felt somewhat the ownership of acquaintance with him. But, having discovered that no less than six out of the eleven members of the team seemed to be Graham, he lost interest and chose to follow the movements of some more individual figure.

It was with a thrill of pride in his own judgment, then, that he heard one boy ask his companion "who was that bareheaded guy that seemed to be all over the place." To which the other answered, "That's Stanton."

THE GREEN C

"Bub Stanton, the captain?" inquired the first.

"Sure; isn't he some class?"

"Regular greased lightning."

Which bit of unsubstantiated physics seemed to Jack to describe his hero exactly.

For hero is what Stanton had become to Jack by the time the whistle blew over the last down and the game was called. He, who had been unable all along to join in the Cleveland yell, his voice sounding so weirdly conspicuous in his own ear, joined in the shout that went up at the end of the game for Stanton—the incomparable Bub! He listened eagerly to the remarks that were being made on all sides about the well-beloved captain, and he glowed as though he had a personal share in this popularity. He wished that for Stanton's sake he knew more about the game, and decided that his next money would go on a book of rules and plays.

Edie that evening was entertained by a spirited though necessarily sketchy account of the remarkable football talents of the captain of the Cleveland eleven.

"You should have seen him when he *did* get the ball and ran down the field with all the others after him! Oh, say! Only he tripped over some one who just grabbed his legs."

THE HERO

"How mean!" cried Edie, indignantly.

Whereat Jack launched into an explanation of the game that would have paralyzed an expert, whitened the hair of the good Dr. Hall, struck terror to the hearts of the boldest players in the country, and had the noble pastime abolished by humanitarians in less than a week.

"That," said the horrified Edie, at the conclusion, "is nothing but barbarous. If you ever dare to get on the team"—she spoke, Jack noted with a grim little smile, as though it were as easy to get on the team as to step on a car—"I shall tell mother how they play, and have her make you resign at once. I never saw such silly creatures as boys! They can't have any fun unless they're killing one another. I think football is just wicked!"

"Sure, a girl *would* think that," said Jack, gratified.

About this time Jack began to suffer acutely from Latin verbs. Hilton, his Latin instructor, was a verb specialist, and maintained often in the presence of his classes and elsewhere, that when you have mastered the verbs of any language you have practically mastered the language. Moreover, he not only set forth this theory, he believed in it and

THE GREEN C

was influenced by it pedagogically, so that while Jack found it possible to slip through the declensions of nouns and adjectives without close enough application to interfere with his health, happiness, or the pursuit of more interesting business, verbs demanded study. But no sooner had he learned how to tack endings on a root than he found he was tacking them onto the wrong roots, because, one day when he was not looking, a whole new set of endings had been sprung on the class, to be used according to the instructor's pleasure. This, it appeared, was governed solely by the instructor's personal affection or dislike for the boys who were droning out synopses in class or eating calcium carbonate in the back room under the impression that they were writing them on the blackboard.

For some reason Jack fell under the ban of those in whom Hilton delighted not. It may have been due to the fact that Jack, feeling he had discovered his teacher's baleful system, refused, on principle, to study for him at all. This mark of his disapproval might have been passed by unnoticed; Hilton being a busy man, might have gone on scoring the usual number of failures beside Jack's name in the mark-book without thought, had it not been for the celebrated occasion on which Jack con-

THE HERO

vulsed the class by declining the verb *fleo* as *fleo*, *fleonis*, under the impression that it was a substantive which he delicately translated as "a small black insect."

It was difficult for Hilton to accept this as anything but gross disorder, though it had been done in all innocence, so Jack was set to writing out the synopsis of *fleo* in its proper capacity ten times in his empty class-room before he left the building that afternoon.

Jack sat hunched miserably over the long sheet of yellow paper, referring at desperate intervals to a grammar that seemed to be of no use save to get in the way of his elbow, or to drop off the desk with unnerving thumps, or to catch the blots that dropped from Jack's too thoroughly dipped and too little used pen. He felt that writing a verb nine times is far easier than writing it once, if that once is the time when the endings have to be found and fitted. He was endeavoring to couch this fact in the form of a neat conundrum to spring on Miskell some day, when suddenly there was the sound of footsteps in the hall, and a head was thrust through at the doorway, a head crowned with hair that was the color, quality, and general arrangement of a bristle door-mat.

Jack's heart missed a beat, and something

THE GREEN C

in the round eyes that he saw now at close range reminded him that once before, in the days of his unenlightenment, when football was an untried mystery, he had addressed this individual on the subject of Graham and in reference to a baseball.

"Stocky here?" asked the intruder, genially, after having first made reasonably sure that he was not, and walked in. Then Jack's eyes beheld the green C on his sweater, and the realization of what it stood for in this case made him tingle with emotion.

"Nope," he said, extra carelessly.

His visitor swung himself on a desk within easy chatting distance. No one would have dreamed that he had noted the look in Jack's eye.

"Stocky," he observed, airily, "is very remiss. When you preach punctuality it seems to me you ought to be a shining example of it. I like Stocky well enough, only he's not always polite. He must learn to have more consideration. It's lucky I happen to be free this afternoon, or I'd teach him a lesson myself. I wouldn't wait for him."

Jack breathed through an opened mouth, and did his best to think up a prompt and witty reply.

"Now, it seems to me," went on the new-

THE HERO

comer, not waiting for Jack, "we might figure out something between us, even now—" He broke off suddenly. "I presume I am addressing one of Stocky's victims?"

"I—no—er—Mr. Stockton is just our class instructor. We don't really have him in anything. He's Latin three at the lowest."

"Oh," the other formed it roundly and finally. His tone, when he spoke again, had an added civility that put Jack hopeless miles beneath him. "I was under the impression that you were a junior."

"No," gulped Jack, scarlet in his shame. A silence threatened, and Jack broke it with a desperate effort. "You—you're—Stanton, aren't you?"

The football god apparently forced himself to look interested.

"How did you know?" he asked.

"I—I saw the game with Newton. Gee, but you made a dandy run!"

Stanton had some difficulty trying to look annoyed at this enthusiasm.

"Going in for football?" he asked, carelessly.

His modesty thrilled Jack to the marrow.

"I guess so," he breathed, awed at this condescension.

"Done any playing?"

THE GREEN C

"Not to speak of." Jack had every right to blush at this, and he did so.

"You want to get a little weight on you. How heavy are you?"

Jack dizzily saw himself thrust onto the team already. He thought of what Edie had said, and for the first time was uncomfortable in the knowledge that he possessed a mother.

"Hundred and eight," he answered.

"Put on forty pounds," advised Stanton, easily, "then come round and see me."

"How—how much do you weigh?" asked Jack, with trembling impertinence.

"I'm light," acknowledged Stanton. "We've got enough like me. What we need is weight for our center. We'd stand a chance against any college team if we had enough meat."

Jack absorbed every word to detail later to Miskell, to Cartwright, to Edie—to everybody who would listen and who realized what it meant that Stanton, Bub Stanton, the captain of the Cleveland eleven, was talking football chances with him, little Jack Downing!

"There's a lot in that." He wondered whether it were best to agree or to argue. "But don't you think a knowledge of the game counts for a good deal, too?"

"Knowledge of the game!" Stanton snapped

THE HERO

his fingers. "That! Every little freshie on the bleachers has a knowledge of the game—knows how to score—on the bleachers; knows a lot about tackling—bird's-eye view. Get him into a good rush, and let's see where he is. Swept right off his feet like—like a chip in a high sea."

Jack maliciously thought of all this as directed against Cartwright. Obviously he, himself, was excluded from the general run of "freshies on the bleachers." Not only was he receiving distinction, but it was no less a person than Stanton, Bub Stanton, who was according it.

"Ah, Stanton." Stockton wore rubber heels.

Stanton slipped from his perch gracefully and without embarrassment, and, walking up to the instructor with the nonchalance of the truly great, handed him an official-looking paper.

"All complete this time?" smiled Stockton.

"This time I hope so, sir."

"Excellent. Good afternoon, Stanton."

"Good afternoon, sir."

Stockton looked at Jack, who returned to the gloom of his unfathomable Latin. The light Stanton had brought into the room went out with him. Jack felt Stockton's gaze, and referred again unprofitably to his grammar.

THE GREEN C

"Are you spending the week-end here?" asked Stockton, at last, suavely.

"No, sir—it's for Mr. Hilton, sir—a synopsis."

"How unfortunate that you were interrupted in your work." Stockton was gathering together some of the books from his desk-top and putting them in order. "Social intercourse is so detrimental to one's mental equilibrium." He pulled a jingling bunch of keys from his pocket and inserted one in the lock. Then he looked up and fixed Jack with his steady gray eyes. "Young man," he said, in a changed tone, "I advise you to quit dreaming and commence to plug."

VI

THE HEDGELEY GAME

THERE was to be a game with the high school at Hedgeley, a town some distance away, the following Saturday, and there was practice all week in preparation. Jack, who had made great headway in his study of athletics, knew enough now to look forward anxiously to the event.

Monday afternoon he spent watching the football stars in the big field back of the school. He began to know many of the players by sight now: Foster, the full-back; Cow Martin, the center, so named because, though redoubtable in build, he lacked grace while running; Little Ludwig, the left tackle, a fiery player of diminutive proportions; Jansen and Tin Pan Cauldwell, the half-backs, the former very blond and business-like, the latter the idol of the school, who could pound the piano with enormous success, and to whom, in the capacity of honor student, boys were apt to point when assailed by their elders for giving

THE GREEN C

too much time to sports. Graham was the left end, the shy, quiet Graham Jack found so kindly and attractive that he often wondered why this big senior was not more popular. Stanton, the captain of the team, was quarter-back. Jack felt, as he gazed at him with swimming eyes, that none could compare with Bub Stanton, tall, lank, sinewy, the apparent center of every scrimmage, the spirit and brains of the team.

Jack went home after this glorious afternoon dreaming of how, in the game with Hedgeley, they would have to call for a substitute, and he would respond from among the freshies on the bleachers in the face of Cartwright's derision. The team would refuse to let him play till Bub Stanton would exclaim: "Go on! He's got the right stuff in him. I was talking with him about it once." So, to Cartwright's chagrin, they would take him to the dressing-room, arm him with football attire, and he would step into the field amid cheers. Then the score would rise like the mercury in a July thermometer, chased up by his efforts; but during the last down he would break his leg or sprain his ankle (a broken leg might cement some of his mother's prejudices against the game). To conclude, as he lay fainting on the ground, the loudly

THE HEDGELEY GAME

cheering team would raise him high, and Stanton would fling over the inert form his own white sweater with the sacred green C. Jack controlled his feeling with difficulty. It was the best football story he knew.

The next morning he saw Stanton standing on the steps of one of the school entrances talking to Tin Pan, and the stout boy who had misdirected him that first day, whose name he had since learned was Phelps.

"I've put on two pounds," Jack hazarded, boldly, as he purposely passed the group on the steps, thereby taking the least convenient entrance.

"Good," drawled Stanton. "Keep it up."

The two extra staircases and the length of a hall were little enough to pay for an answer like that before two other seniors. He wished Cartwright had been there to hear. He lost no time telling him the story, and Miskell, too. Even Cartwright, the critical, found it interesting. Like all remarks made by prominent men, it was witty because a celebrity had voiced it. In thinking it over, Jack discovered that his own part in this repartee had been witty, too. It seemed to him as he revolved it in his mind, when he should have been attending to the Latin on the blackboard, to be very like real col-

THE GREEN C

lege conversation, such as he often had read in books.

Fairly sure now that he might expect at least a nod of recognition from the school hero, Jack took Edie to the scrub game Wednesday afternoon chiefly that she might behold this lordly salutation. Edie's questions concerning the game were a bit embarrassing to Jack, who feared his answers might be overheard. He was forced to reply in confidential whispers that annoyed Edie, who saw no reason for secrecy. Moreover, she picked out Elliott, the best-looking boy, on the team, for Stanton, and could not at first get up the proper enthusiasm for the snub-nosed captain. She preferred Graham, whose face seemed to her "stern" and a little "sad." Jack commenced to be sorry he had brought her at all.

But after she had seen the students rise and respond to some of Stanton's spectacular plays she caught the fire of their hero-worship to a degree at which even Jack was satisfied.

When it was over, by a series of complicated manœuvres, causing Edie to cross under a fence at one end of the field, trot past a group of players at the other, then hastily retrace her course through some unexpected move on their quarry's part, Jack managed to

THE HEDGELEY GAME

bring Edith face to face at last with the disheveled hero of the gridiron.

"This is my sister." Jack presented her apologetically, feeling she looked particularly young and dowdy for her thirteen years.

Stanton grinned courteously, disclosing a bloody set of teeth.

"Like football?" he asked, genially.

She was so fascinated by the scarlet teeth, the result of a bruised gum, that she only gulped and nodded.

"Come out and play a little," suggested Stanton, with unbelievable democracy.

The brother and sister doubled up with mirth.

"I would be scared," giggled Edith, nervously. "Does it hurt?"

"You're right it does!" Stanton rubbed his dingy elbows. "But that's where the fun comes in."

"That's hard for girls to understand, I guess," broke in Jack, who had not intended that Edie should monopolize all of the conversation.

"It will hurt more if I don't hit it up now for home and a rub-down, so I'm off. Good-by. Come and see us really play some time." And with a merry yet regal wave of his hand he proceeded to "hit it up" without stint of energy.

THE GREEN C

"Gee," breathed Jack, "I'd love to be him!"

"Has he got any sisters?" asked Edie. Her loyalty to Jack would not permit her to wish to be Stanton's sister more openly.

They talked it over together continuously. Jack found Edie a better listener, and Edie found it not only easier but pleasant to devote time to the discussion of football now. Because of Stanton's special invitation, Jack promised to save up and put fifteen cents toward taking Edie to the Thanksgiving game, that with Hedgeley being financially impossible.

"After all," Edie had declared, to account for her desire to see what she had so often denounced as a brutal pastime, "you never told me about there being so many rules against injuring each other; and I suppose if you really are careful you don't need to get hurt at all?"

"You can't be very careful if you want to play decently." Jack defended the manly cruelty of it. "Look what happened to Bub's teeth!"

"Oo-o! Didn't they look awful? I guess he's nice-looking when he's fixed up properly. He has lovely eyes. You couldn't tell, he was so dirty and messed up. Still, I like a strong face."

THE HEDGELEY GAME

"He's strong-looking, all right." Jack revealed in her sympathetic praise.

"Graham is strong-looking, too, don't you think, in a quieter sort of way?" suggested Edie.

"Yes, Graham's nice; but sometimes he's grouchy, they say."

"Grouchy" was not the romantic epithet that Edith would have applied to Graham's attractive gravity.

"Graham?" repeated Emily. They were all seated in the library after supper. "Is that the Graham on Montague Street?"

"I guess so," answered Jack, carelessly. As though it mattered where Graham lived.

"That's Mrs. Henry Graham's son," Emily explained to her mother. "Mr. and Mrs. Graham are going away for a few weeks—to New York, I think. The Parkers told me. They'll be gone over Thanksgiving."

Uninteresting as this bit of gossip seemed to Jack at the time, he was to recall it later very vividly.

At the Hedgeley game on Saturday, Jack had cause to marvel at the amount of knowledge he had acquired since he had last watched the battle for the pigskin on that field of glory. Still, he would have been very much at sea in many cases if it had not been for

THE GREEN C

the excited comments of a little group of juniors who sat in front of him and did not seem to miss a single play.

Hedgeley kicked off, and Elliott, Cleveland's right tackle, caught the ball on the twenty-yard line, but was downed in his tracks. They lined up quickly, and Cow Martin passed the ball to Foster, back on the ten-yard line, for a kick. In his excitement the center passed too high, and while Foster was pulling down the ball and getting it off the Hedgeley tackle broke through and blocked the kick. The ball rolled back to Cleveland's two-yard line, where Hedgeley's captain promptly followed and dropped on it, while Hedgeley's sympathizers rose and howled with joy. The juniors in front of Jack groaned.

"Here's where they buck right through the center," prophesied one, gloomily, voicing the general belief; and every one was surprised when the Hedgeley right half-back made a rush to get around Cleveland's left end. Graham wasted no time, but, diving in head first, not only broke the interference, but landed his man. First down, with still two yards to go. The Cleveland cheer broke out sharply, almost raspingly, at an increased tempo, for the students were too interested in the game, and got it over as quickly as

THE HEDGELEY GAME

possible. There was a feeling of strained attention throughout the crowds that did not encourage yelling.

On the second play Hedgeley's half-back shot like a rocket into the Cleveland line, which bore up like a stone wall. Every player on both teams was involved in the scrimmage. Jack saw the lines rock forward and back for what seemed an incredible length of time. When the referee disentangled the mass the ball was discovered to be one yard nearer the Cleveland goal. Voices broke loose. The Hedgeley yell was all but drowned by the desperate cries of the Clevelanders.

"Hold 'em, Cleveland! Hold 'em! Hold 'em! Hold 'em!"

The biggest man on the Hedgeley team, the full-back, now started with the ball, charging between Cow Martin and his right guard, Fogarty. Tin Pan Cauldwell saw the play coming, and with all his force flung himself under it. There was no shouting now. The crowds waited in breathless silence as the referee seemed to toss aside the prostrate bodies and uncovered the ball. His voice, calm, impersonal, deeply penetrating, sent strange shivers down Jack's spine.

"Cleveland's ball!" As he spoke he stood within a foot of Cleveland's goal. The roar-

THE GREEN C

ing of the spectators, after that thrilling pause, sounded like the sudden rattle of a thunder-shower on a tin roof.

Foster dropped back for a kick. The juniors in front of Jack set up a shriek of amazement when the ball was passed, instead, to Cauldwell, who started for Hedgeley's left end. Hedgeley's defense switched to meet it as one man; but in passing Jansen, Cauldwell tossed him the ball. It was an old trick, but in this amazing crisis it worked. Jansen was making good headway down the field while Hedgeley still stood massed to receive Cauldwell. Hedgeley's full-back was the first to recover, and, catching up with Jansen, tackled him from behind and downed him just over the border of Hedgeley's territory. Cleveland's prospects began to look brighter. On the next line-up Stanton took the ball through a broken field for a run of twenty-five yards, to Hedgeley's thirty-yard line. Another first down, with the Cleveland sympathizers screaming encouragement. The next attempt, however, was thrown back without gain.

It was now the second down with ten yards to go. The Cleveland formation foreshadowed an on-side kick or a forward pass. Again the spectators were to be astonished by what

THE HEDGELEY GAME

followed. Stanton dropped back, and, before the Hedgeley forwards could charge, the ball was sailing gaily over the Hedgeley goal-posts!

The rest of the first half proceeded tamely enough in comparison. Cleveland played safe, and Hedgeley tried again and again in vain to gain any advantage. When the whistle blew the score stood three to nothing, and the jubilant juniors in front of Jack converted themselves into a chorus for the praising of the captain of their team.

But Hedgeley had a surprise up her sleeve. Her team trotted out upon the field grim with determination, and opened the second half by breaking down the confident Cleveland's defense and finally sending her quarterback around the end to score a touch-down. The goal that went with it set the Hedgeley rooters crowing, and in the racket that followed Jack dimly heard the defiant answer of his own high-school yell.

From that moment the game became a matter for mothers to groan over. Hedgeley, elated with her brilliant start, felt she had rattled Cleveland, and unremittingly continued her attack, with the result that all the play was in the home territory; and Cleveland's only chance to cheer was to encourage, or in delight that they held their adversaries

THE GREEN C

back. Once, near the end of the game, on second down, Jack saw the Hedgeley end tackled near the Cleveland goal by a heavy figure from the home eleven, who was dragged several feet along the hard ground in the process. This figure continued to lie prone throughout the cheering that followed.

"That's Graham," declared one of Jack's juniors. "He let himself go that time! Say, he went down like an old potato-sack!"

"I guess he's done for himself," said another, critically. "He looks to be down and out for sure."

They had helped Graham to his feet, and he was parading up and down in a gingerly fashion, supported by Cow Martin and Elliott.

Suddenly he broke away from them, stretched his arms, shook his shoulders, kicked once or twice, and with scarcely a limp took his place in the line-up amid the applause that makes such recoveries possible.

There was only five minutes to play now, with the score six to three. Jack watched closely, but without much hope. He was with the crowd murmuring, "Forward pass!" as the ball landed cleanly in the hands of the big Cleveland left-end. He saw the blocking, and then suddenly his heart leaped at the appearance of a lone, bent figure emerg-

THE HEDGELEY GAME

ing from the confusion, heading straight for the Hedgeley goal.

"Graham!" roared the crowds.

"Yea, Graham!" shrieked the juniors. "Go it, boy! Hit it up! Go it!"

For an instant the Hedgeleys were dazed. The first to recover were kept off by the interference, which had formed quickly around the runner. There was a clear field for a touch-down, but seventy-five yards to go. The juniors waved their arms and counted wildly as Graham crossed the center line and flew down the white-striped field.

"Fifty! Oh you Graham! Forty! Thirty! Go on! Eat 'em up! Yea—a! Thirty! Keep it up! Go on! Wow!"

Jack stood tense and still in all that surging noise. His eyes were fixed on Graham en route for victory. It was so exultingly sure! The end of the game was too close to permit Hedgeley to recover from this touch-down. His throat swelled uncomfortably.

The juniors hugged each other hysterically, and one with a most penetrating voice tried to coach Graham above the racket.

"Twenty—oh! Hit it up, old sock! Ten! Make it! Make it! Go on!"

Graham was flagging! The former fall was telling on him in this long run, and he was

THE GREEN C

limping visibly. The field closing in after, was almost upon him. Jack saw two of the Hedgeley men bearing down hard.

"Fool 'em!" screamed the juniors, brokenly.
"Fool 'em! Go on!"

The Hedgeley men fell upon Graham at the five-yard line. A peculiar hush came over the spectators as the referee trotted up. It was as if each individual felt that something was amiss. The juniors were rigid and pale, with their eyes fixed; Jack himself felt a strange chill pass over him. Then the incredible happened.

"Hedgeley's ball!" sounded the clear, cold voice of the referee.

"Hedgeley's!" the word swept over the crowds in a roar of amazement that swelled into the thundering yell.

"He means Cleveland's," Jack found himself repeating aloud.

One of the juniors in front was rocking to and fro in his seat pounding his open palm.

"He fumbled!" he almost sobbed. "He fumbled! Oh, great, bellowing cats! He *fumbled—now!*"

The others stood silent, still watching rather blankly.

Jack leaned forward in sudden terror. Something had happened to Graham. He

THE HEDGELEY GAME

had exhausted himself; he had broken down on the point of victory. Dazedly he saw Graham rise and join his line-up. The smarting tears rushed to Jack's eyes, and he felt sick. Surely there was some mistake. The referee had muddled things in his excitement. He was overwhelmed with a desire to protest. Clearly some one ought to protest!

The ball had risen, soared irregularly, and fell. A whistle blew, and the game was over.

The Cleveland team drew close and cheered the victors, then scattered to their sweaters. Two figures remained after the others left.

"Say," said one of the juniors, motioning to these, his voice hoarse. "Stanton is some wrathful! I'd hate to be Graham just now."

"Who can blame him?" almost wept he who had been most audible in the late uproar. "What happened, anyway? Am I blind or just crazy? Was he even tackled? But he fumbled, all right; he fumbled on the five-yard line! If he'd only held on another minute! Oh, it's fierce!"

"The ball was slippery," sneered the third. "I saw the feller that greased it."

"If you want to know the whole unvarnished truth," declared the second, "I'll tell you. He—just—quit."

"Graham?" the first protested. "Why,

THE GREEN C

look at the way he got up when he'd been stepped on just before, with Crawford."

"Yes, but perhaps you didn't notice that he fussed about himself then, too," conceded the third.

"Aw, go on! You get some one to pull you round the field after him as if you were a little train of cars, and then step on your ear, and let's see how quick you are to get up and get to work again," exclaimed Graham's defender.

"Say, what do they think they're playing football for? To learn manners or dancing?" demanded the third.

"Don't tell me anything about Graham!" grunted the second.

"I'm not so stuck on him myself, personally. He's a snob. But I don't believe—oh, it's a funny business all around. I sure don't know what to think. There wasn't a reason on earth why he should have fumbled there."

"There was a mighty good reason for it," said the second, with bitter emphasis. "It's the reason why you can't find any one who really likes Walt Graham—except Bub Stanton; but he likes everybody. It's simply this, and what I say was proved to-day—Graham has a yellow streak."

VII

THE YELLOW STREAK

JACK was almost sorry that he had seen his second game. Football had stood for courage and chivalry until now; but, though the pain in connection with defeat seemed natural and bearable, cowardice was something he had not thought of before, and could not recall now without a sickening sense of shame. He could not believe that any one so near to victory would have forgotten all in the pettiness of fear. Above all, he could not connect such conduct with Graham, as he knew him, and, in spite of realizing that the attitude of the juniors he had overheard had become the attitude of the school, he was unable to bring himself into sympathy with it. Apart from everything else, there seemed to him to be something ignoble in this sudden turning against one who had been so nearly a hero.

For a while Jack lost his taste for football, and wondered if he even cared to see that

THE GREEN C

great Thanksgiving-day event, the Danbury game. As the days went on, however, some of his bitterness died away in the increasing excitement over it, for it was the last and biggest game of the season.

One rainy afternoon Jack had a last period vacant, and he chose to spend it in the gymnasium, under pretense of practice on the parallel bars, his eyes fixed most attentively on the group around the tackling-dummy, especially upon one grimy individual with rebellious hair, who was directing his associates to "hit it up" and "get some oatmeal into it."

After the bell had sounded the end of the day's sessions, Jack was changing his shoes in the locker-room when he was almost stepped on by the brawny Graham. The big football-player merely muttered a half-heard apology, and proceeded to separate himself from his jersey in silence. Jack felt his throat tighten in the other's presence. He wanted to say something, but his mind was blank; and while he was wondering how he might most tactfully refer to the blunder in Saturday's game his good angel sent in Bub Stanton to interrupt him. Jack instantly proceeded to radiate adoration; but Stanton was too busy to notice that there was

THE YELLOW STREAK

any one in the room but Graham, on whom he opened fire immediately.

"See here, Walt, what's eating you, anyway?" he demanded, inelegantly.

"Nothing," answered Graham, sullenly.

"Don't you give me credit for having eyes? Well, I can see with them, too. Just how bad did you get soaked in the game on Saturday?"

"Not at all."

"You're sure nothing's broken or sprained? You landed on Crawford like a cyclone. How about your ribs?"

"All right."

"And your fingers?"

Graham wriggled them to prove they were unhurt. Stanton rubbed the back of his head with a puzzled gesture, and looked Graham up and down long and thoughtfully.

"Well," was his final sum-up, "you may be all there, but you act like a prancing funeral. I was trying to find an excuse for your bad manners. How about laying off for a couple of days?"

"Don't want to. I feel all right," growled Graham, impatiently, his face hidden, as he laced up his shoes.

"You disguise your feelings wonderfully," said Stanton, in mock admiration. "Do you

THE GREEN C

know what your tackling to-day reminded me of?"

"No."

"My great-grandmother's stiff," was the disrespectful reply.

"Oh, what's the use of getting excited over a dummy?" broke out Graham.

"Humph! that's not the way you talk when you're feeling well," grunted Stanton, wisely.

"I'm all right, I tell you. You needn't worry about me at all."

"It's not you," said Stanton, with a sudden serious sharpness. "It's the team."

Graham stood up, stark still, facing Stanton, his back to the light.

"Want me to get off?" he asked, quietly, in a harsh voice.

"Aw, cut out the 'Sir-I'm-a-lady' business." Stanton shook himself impatiently. "You're one of our big men, and we need you. You know that well enough. And you can put it over all of them when you want to play. The way you tackled Crawford was well worth watching. And you made sixty-three good solid yards down the field yesterday, if you'd only—" He broke off in confusion, to cover which he continued more vehemently. "But you're no good to

THE YELLOW STREAK

any one if you're going to trip over your own shadow and tackle as if you were scared of mussing your hair."

An uncomfortable silence followed. Graham continued dressing, while Stanton stood kicking at the floor and frowning. Jack wished himself elsewhere, and made knots in his shoe-laces in his haste to get away.

"Do you know what they are all saying about you?" began Stanton again, looking straight at Graham.

"I don't care." Graham's voice was low.

"They're beginning to call you—Little Fumbler."

It was a cruel shot, and went home, as Graham showed in spite of himself. Jack felt, rather than saw, the spasmodic straightening of the big body. His own heart seemed to burst against his ribs, and his hands became cold and useless. In the pause that followed he felt that Stanton was suffering, too.

"By heaven," said Graham, in a tense voice, at last, "I'll fight the first that—"

"Aw, rats!" Stanton interrupted. "You'd have to begin on ten before you left the gym at all. You know that's not the way to shut them up. There's only one thing for you to do."

THE GREEN C

"Do you believe—" Graham's voice grew hoarse and broke.

"Do you suppose I'd be around here arguing with you and begging you to show them what sort of fat-heads they are if I did?"

Graham did not answer.

"I just thought—" Stanton shifted, and his voice sounded a bit strained. "I just thought perhaps there was something wrong."

"Well, there isn't."

Neither spoke, and Stanton made preparations to change his clothes. Jack was ready at last and crossed to the door, hoping he would not be observed. He did not know whether to feel flattered or disturbed when Stanton nodded to him curtly in answer to the "Hullo!" he had to utter when he caught the captain's eye. On the threshold the mad desire to say something to Graham seized him again. He hesitated and went through the unusual operation of arranging his hair at the little mirror near the door.

"Want to come home with me to-night, Bub?" asked Graham, lifelessly.

"What's the matter? Folks gone already?"

"Yes, I've got the whole place to myself. Will you come?"

"Can't, to-night. Where's your uncle? I thought he was going to stay with you."

THE YELLOW STREAK

"He went and got typhoid or something," answered Graham, with large indefiniteness.

"Too bad. I don't envy you. It must be kind of lonesome." Stanton's manner warmed many degrees, and he looked at Graham with pity, at which Graham instantly froze again.

"I like it," he said, hastily.

Jack, finding nothing to say, gave it up and left them.

The Monday of Thanksgiving week was a gloomy day drenched in rain. Jack went to the gym locker-room to look for his Greek history, which he remembered to have left there the Thursday before, his last Greek-history day. Though, for reasons it is not fair to Jack to mention, it was considerably past closing hour, Jack distinctly heard the creak and jar of the tackling dummy in the gym, and he looked in curiously.

A single player was practising, and the great, empty room made him look so small that Jack did not recognize him as he rushed forward, flung himself on the swaying figure, and dropped with a thud on the padded mat. Then a choking sensation arose in Jack's throat, and an inexplicable smarting attacked his eyes at the lonesomeness of big Graham in that shadowy room.

THE GREEN C

These feelings vanished in boyish awe when Graham walked toward him for another rush, and Jack beheld a streak of thick red blood that streamed from a cut over the other's dusty temple and zigzagged down his cheek.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jack, admiringly and without preface. "You're bleeding!"

Graham, panting a little, raised a grimy hand to the wound.

"I butted into the stanchion," he explained. "I slipped."

"Here, don't touch it with your fingers," cried Jack, eagerly, holding out a dingy handkerchief. "Use this. You'll get ptomaine poisoning if you get dirt in it."

"Thanks." Graham accepted the precautionary measures offered, and could not suppress a tight little smile of pride at the red he mopped up. "I must have looked like a pirate."

"Does it hurt?" asked Jack, with interest.

"Naw—only for a minute or two."

"Gee! It takes nerve," declared Jack, after a slight pause. Graham's gray eyes looked at him sharply under the dun-colored folds of the borrowed handkerchief.

"What does?"

"Football. I was just thinking"—Jack went on to explain the silence that had pre-



"GEE!" EXCLAIMED JACK, ADMIRINGLY, "YOU'RE BLEEDING!"

THE YELLOW STREAK

ceded his last remark—"tackling is bad enough, but being tackled—"

Graham bit his lip and examined the blood on the handkerchief.

"It's all in the game," he said, dispassionately.

"I've often wondered what it felt like to be running along with the ball under your arm, knowing that everybody was trying his darnedest to bowl you over and get it away." Jack's eyes sparkled. "It must be kind of thrilling. But don't you lose your head?"

Another keen look from Graham.

"You'd better not," he said, dryly.

"I'd feel like chucking the ball as far from me as it would go and let them chase it an' leave me alone," Jack giggled, excitedly.

"You wouldn't." Graham handed back the handkerchief, and sat on the edge of the padded mat, clasping his dusty hands about his knees. Jack pocketed the handkerchief and took the liberty of sitting beside him.

"I s'pose," speculated Jack, "the knowledge that Bub Stanton and all the rest of 'em are looking for the best in you sort of keeps you up." Graham nodded. "Funny how that holds you all the time."

Graham shifted a little.

"Sometimes," he said, haltingly. "Some-

THE GREEN C

times, when you've been soaked over the head once, you're sort of shy about getting another dose. That's the only thing."

The gym was growing dark in the fading of the November light. The radiators along the walls began to "knock" a little disconsolately, and the air chilled. Jack looked from the heavily veined powerful hands on the other's knee to the muscular arm under the soiled white and green jersey, and suddenly he realized that he was sitting close to an individual, that this great body so near to him on the mat was the body of Graham—Walt Graham. A little shiver slid down his spine at the thought of what he had been saying; it was almost with fear that he looked toward Graham's face, then he turned away quickly with blazing cheeks, for Graham had been looking down at him with eyes that held the piercing longing of dumb creatures and lonely men. In the lengthening pause that followed there returned the old overwhelming desire to say something, as it had come to him in the locker-room that day, but again he felt helplessly tongue-tied, with nothing more relevant than blazing rockets and stars crowding his mind.

"Say," he burst out at last, in desperation, "I'd be mighty proud to be you."

THE YELLOW STREAK

"Me!" Graham flushed vividly.

"You mean so much to the school. Look what you are to the team!"

Had Graham arisen and soared about the gym, he could not have surprised Jack more, for at this he leaned forward suddenly with his head in his hands and commenced to sob or laugh. Jack felt his hair tingle with emotion.

"What's the matter; are you crying?" he demanded, alarmed.

Graham threw back his head and showed it was a laugh, and Jack in his inexperience was reassured.

"If you knew everything that I know and were trying to rub it in," began Graham, steadying his voice, "you couldn't have hit any harder."

Jack stared; and Graham looked back, steadily crushing his hands together, as if under a tremendous nervous strain.

"What made you say all that?" he exploded, finally.

"I don't know," answered Jack, with entire truth.

"Look at here," said Graham, after another silence, never taking his eyes from Jack's face. "I'll show you something." He fumbled for a moment at his belt and produced

THE GREEN C

a crumpled envelope which he opened, spreading out the note within. "This is from my mother; they are away—traveling." He searched among the written words, and then read: "'After hearing of these accidents'—she mentioned some in the big college games, like Lawton getting his leg broke up at Yale last week—'you see I could not have an instant's peace till my boy gives up playing. I am so sure—so sure of your—love—that I know you will do this for me just as soon as I ask it, and I need no pledge nor answer. I never have asked you to give up anything for me before, and as I write this I know that you will remember that and, much as the game may mean to you, and my dear . . . and do not think I miscalculate its importance to my brave . . . to my . . . still I am sure that—that—that you—love me more . . . and that you'll give it—give it up right away an'—an' . . . grant—me my . . . peace o' mind—mind—even—as—I—I ask . . . for it . . .'" Toward the end of this reading Graham's voice was very hoarse. He stumbled over many of the phrases in the increasing dusk. Jack sat watching with eyes wide and lips parted, which brought back all the babyhood, so lately vanished from his face.

THE YELLOW STREAK

"When did this come?" Jack spoke in an unexpected whisper.

"Last week."

"And you went right on practising?" Jack murmured, more to himself.

"Yes."

"Did you tell her that?"

"No; I haven't written about that. She—" Graham spoke with difficulty. "She didn't want any promise."

"You're going to play, anyway?" Jack's cheek burned.

"Say," Graham laughed, harshly, "don't you really know what the fellers are saying about the Hedgeley game?"

Jack heard his heart thumping, and it took all his courage to speak. "You ought to mind *her*." He sat in agony under Graham's queer, sustained smile.

"It's three days to the game," said Graham.

"What made you wait so long? If you got the letter last week—" Jack's anger surprised himself. In that semi-dark, under stress, he spoke as if Graham were his equal. He had to think over his impertinence and lose his wrath in wonder before Graham answered, his head averted now, his clenched hands under his chin.

THE GREEN C

"I'm a liar now," he said, slowly. "I'm not really thinking about the team. There are lots of good subs. I was thinking about myself."

Jack adjusted facts in his clear young head.

"It's that you're scared of what they'll say," he declared, bluntly. Graham stirred impatiently, now bowing his forehead on his hands. "They might say you'd faked up that letter with your mother. Oh, that's beastly!" He shook his head hopelessly. "But then if you do play it's only because you're scared not to, and it wouldn't be square to your mother. It's sort of—cowardly to be afraid of what they'll say." He rumpled his hair perplexedly. "Maybe you could let her know—no, I guess that wouldn't do. After all, it's only their talk. Say, look! If they don't understand, and think you're a coward when you ain't, why—" Jack's eyes lightened with memories of Mr. Carington's definition of a good sport. "Gee, you'd be a sort of a hero! Say—oh, whee!—you'd be—just *great!*"

Graham dropped his hands from his face and turned upon Jack.

"Did you see the Hedgeley game?" he demanded, fiercely.

THE YELLOW STREAK

"Yes," answered Jack.

Graham eyed him for some moments, his mouth working nervously.

"You saw what happened?"

"It—it was an accident!" protested Jack, cold with fear.

"No." Graham's chest heaved, and his voice was full of queer little inflections, reminding Jack of a trolley-wire on a frosty night. "It was not. Everything they say about me—is true." Jack drew back horror-stricken, and Graham went on jerkily. "I—lost my nerve. There was a streak of yellow in me—and I never knew it. Then I got scared blue over the Thanksgiving game. I wished and wished that—something would happen to keep me off the team. I wanted to quit. I—I prayed I'd get sick. Then I got this letter."

Jack's head was swimming.

"You mean you were glad when you got that letter?"

"I don't know. Yes—I was, till I saw what was the matter with me. It wasn't this"—Graham motioned to the blood on his temple—"you could hit me your hardest—you could break my arm for me right now—gee, I wish you would! I wish that something would happen to show how little I care about that.

THE GREEN C

It ain't pain. It's being—being dead scared of the yellow streak. I couldn't stand thinking it might come again in the Danbury game. Then came the letter, and I could get out of it easy—so easy." He gave vent to a bitter, sobbing laugh. "Well, I can't live this way. I've got to show myself it won't happen again. It's to get right with myself. I've got to play that game."

"But what about the letter?" almost whispered Jack.

Graham rose, and his face was lost in the deep-blue shadows.

"That letter," he said, steadily, "is going to get lost in the mail."

Jack was a little late getting to school the next morning. Cartwright greeted him as he slammed his books hastily into his desk.

"So your friend Graham has resigned from the team, I see."

"Resigned?" repeated Jack, electrified. "What do you mean?"

"Resigned this morning. There's a big hollering going on about it. Bub Stanton's ready to die, and the game with Danbury will probably go up the flue."

"When did you hear this?"

THE YELLOW STREAK

"This morning. He got a letter from his marmer, Graham did, telling her baby boy to quit. He didn't show the letter to anybody—oh no! it was private! But he got it." Cartwright's contempt was venomous. "Well, I guess she was rooting for Cleveland, all right, when she made him resign."

After school Jack, mustering up all his courage, called on Graham in the lonely house in Montague Street.

"You left this in the gym yesterday. I thought you might need it," said Jack.

Graham looked from the dilapidated belt to Jack's flushed face.

"I guess you know that isn't mine," he answered.

"Doesn't even Bub Stanton understand?" Jack wasted no more words now. "Haven't you shown him the letter?"

"No," Graham smiled.

"But that's not fair to him!" exclaimed Jack. "You have a right—"

"Yes; but there's no letter to show," said Graham, gently.

"No letter!" Jack's head whirled.

"Nope. It got lost last night in the mail."

"You—you—" Speech failed Jack.

"I burned it," answered Graham; and Jack beheld a new steadiness in his eyes that made

THE GREEN C

his whole white face older, the face of a man.

"As soon as it was ashes I saw the whole truth. That was the yellow streak in me coming out again, see?"

"No—what do you mean?"

"Burning the letter was the same old panic come back. It was plain up and down lying because I was scared to face the music. It was quitting—again."

Jack was silent for some time, thinking hard.

"Haven't you anything, though, to show them that—well, that you have an excuse for not playing?"

"That's the funny part. The coward in me went and destroyed the excuse. I suppose we always make things harder for ourselves by trying to worm out of doing the right thing at the start. And yet," he added, in a strange voice, "I'm kind of glad it's going to be so hard."

"Oh, but if you could only shut them up somehow!"

"I don't think I ever cared so much about that part of it all. It was something in here I minded most." He touched his breast, and even in his youthfulness Jack read and perhaps instinctively half understood the peace in Graham's grave eyes as he added, gently, "And that's quiet now."

VIII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

THE Thanksgiving game with Danbury gained even more attention because of the sensational resignation of big Graham at the last moment. Those who had forgotten the scandal of Hedgeley raked it up again. Nothing else was discussed within the high-school grounds, and the students divided themselves into two factions, those who, like Cartwright, could find no excuse for Graham and hated him for his apparent disloyalty, and those, painfully few, who remembered what he had done in the past and stanchly upheld him in spite of all.

Jack, of course, was the warmest and most devoted of his defenders. He alone had seen the mysterious letter, and, though most of the students doubted its existence, he gained a certain fame thereby.

"Aw, the kid's dreaming," was the favorite theory with which they would meet his most spirited accounts of that afternoon in the gym.

THE GREEN C

It became a standing joke, as the cruelty of boys is inexplicable. For a while it was a common thing to greet members of the team at practice with the query: "Has your ma sent you a letter yet, telling you to quit?"

Once Jack heard some one try this form of wit in the hearing of Bub Stanton. He saw Stanton's good-humored face grow suddenly scarlet and drawn with fury. He walked up close to the student who had made the sarcastic inquiry, and, doubling up his none too cleanly fist, he put a stop to this pleasantry for good and all.

"Say, if you haven't the decency to keep your head shut when a man's down I'll give you a lesson. Cut out that funny business, and just remember that if you had half or one-quarter the grit Graham has packed away in his little finger you'd have something to boast of. Remember that, and think what a sneaking little coward you are to go talking about him as you do!"

Jack almost wept in his pride of Stanton after this. He told Edith, and they worshiped the school captain all through dinner one night till their family was driven into a state of frenzy.

Graham himself walked among his fellow-students quieter and lonelier than ever.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

Save for Bub Stanton he was scarcely seen with any one. But what cut Jack to his tender heart was the realization that Graham, of his own accord, had discarded the white sweater with its big green C, that he had once so loved to wear.

True to his promise, Jack hoarded up his money and was able to take Edith with him to the Thanksgiving game. As they sat there trying to identify their friends in the crowds that surrounded and went past them, they suddenly beheld Graham sitting some distance away, apparently all alone.

"I think it's awful," Edie declared. "Someone ought to make the boys see how splendid he is. I think Doctor Hall ought to say something about it."

"He seems to like being alone," Jack was forced to admit. "I've seen fellers go up and try to be nice to him, and he just backs away from it all. They don't try twice, because he never was much of a favorite, anyway. Half the boys only liked him because he had a C and was a friend of Bub Stanton's."

They forgot all about Graham when the game started. Danbury was worthy of her foe, and Jack's growing knowledge of football became miraculous in the light of Edie's admiration.

THE GREEN C

As the game went on, Jack became aware of an overwhelming desire to belong to it, to share some of the glory of that grim and battered eleven, that he, too, might become famous and beloved like Stanton. He dreamed again the dream that they might run out of substitutes and call for a volunteer from among the spectators. He had no doubt as to who that volunteer would be. He felt strong enough to have accomplished marvels down there in the field under the captaincy of Bub Stanton and in the eyes of that roaring, swaying multitude.

It was Stanton, with his two sensational touch-downs, who won the game for Cleveland. Everybody conceded that. The Danbury team themselves gave an extra cheer for him at the close of the game, a bit of gallantry that thrilled Edie to the marrow.

Stanton's name seemed to be on every one's tongue. His two touch-downs were the sole topic of conversation with everybody they met in the street, save an old lady who was buying vegetables from a mercenary fruiterer, and two soul-sodden men, talking belated politics with a barber in the doorway of his shop.

Edie and Jack so effectually cornered the conversation at the table that night, and gave each other such spirited accounts of the plays

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

one had missed or both had seen, that the other members of the family, who had not been there, were rather startled.

"It may be all very well," said Mrs. Downing, in a tone implying that in truth this would surprise her, "but it sounds to me like a very rough game."

"It is!" declared Emily, quickly.

"Not really," contradicted Jack.

"That's just the fun," interposed the perverted Edie.

"The new rules are terribly strict," added Jack, finishing off the chorus of replies.

"That's the least." Jack's father looked up severely over his spectacles. "There is too much made of all this nonsense; that's what I object to. How can these boys attend properly to their lessons?"

"Tin Pan Cauldwell is an honor student, and he's the half-back," said Jack, eagerly. "They must have decent marks, and Bub Stanton—"

"I can imagine their poor parents," said Emily, sighing for them. "Now I know why poor little Mrs. Stanton always looks like a nervous wreck."

"You only wish you were 'poor little Mrs. Stanton'!" snapped Jack. "I bet she's as proud as Lucifer! Gosh!"

THE GREEN C

It never had occurred to him before that Stanton had a mother. Stanton's home had existed in Jack's mind as a sort of gymnasium, where he was rubbed down after his hard games. This remark of his sister's opened up new fields of thought. He pictured Stanton's little mother hovering about her heroic son, who alternately jollied and protected her, while she glowed with pride.

The Saturday after Thanksgiving the lake froze, and the whole leisured and semi-leisured class of the town took to skates. And there Jack happened to be of the group that gathered about Bub Stanton when he fell and broke his skate. As Jack had been circling around Stanton's little crowd ever since the early moment when he had first spied his hero, his timely arrival was not so much of a coincidence as it seemed.

The boys were condoling with Stanton, where he sat on the frozen bank of the lake, gazing at the broken shaft of steel.

"Pity it wasn't your leg, Bub," said Fatty Phelps, regretfully. "Legs mend themselves when you leave 'em alone."

"Aw, go on; won't he need his leg more than his skate?" returned Tin Pan Cauldwell, who was inclined to be super-subtle.

"But he can't lend them," sighed Elliott,

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

Edie's good-looking member of the eleven.
"Boy, we mourn with thee."

"Stick it together, old sock," suggested Stanton, good-humored in all his misfortune, handing the skate up to him. "Tie a knot in it, dear old Samson."

"Let Fatty do it," answered Elliott. "He must have loads of energy stored up that he's never put to any good use."

"Let Elliott solder it together with some of that hot air he's wasting," rebutted Fatty.

"Go on, fellers"—Stanton suddenly looked up at the sun—"don't let all this good ice melt on you. It 'll get slushy while you're talking. Don't bother about me. I'm going to hike for home and mother." He started to remove his other skate.

"I say, Stanton," piped up Jack, in a scared, thin voice, "I'm so cold I'm going to quit. Take mine, will you?"

A hush fell on the group, and Jack found himself wishing that the ice would crack open and make a meal of them all.

"Good kid," commented Tin Pan.

"A very kind, agreeable little boy," supplemented Foster.

"Go on! He has more nature in him than the whole pack of you," broke in Stanton,

THE GREEN C

roughly. "Get out of here, all of you! I've got something I want to say to him."

They started to disperse laughingly, but Tin Pan and Fatty Phelps held back, uncertain.

"Say, old man," began Phelps, haltingly, "don't let the kid do anything rash while I'm here. You know me, old cheese; I ain't so strong on the exercise game as—"

"Beat it!" was the polite response.

"Aw, look here," said Tin Pan, "let's all three of us quit an'—"

"How long are you going to intrude your company on us? We have private business, me and the kid, here. Git!"

They got, a little thoughtfully, and, once out of ear-shot, made mountains of their own shortcomings in the line of generosity.

"Now, kid," said Stanton, looking at Jack, whose face had turned a deep magenta, "what's all this row about your giving up your skates? Suppose I went and took 'em, then what?"

"I think we Cleveland fellers owe you something," replied Jack, gruffly. "Besides, I'm cold and I don't want to skate any more. Go on, take them." He started to unclamp them.

Stanton rubbed his rough hair perplexedly.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

The ice stretched steel-blue and virgin smooth. It was plain Jack was anxious for him to take the sacrifice. It would make him happier, came the illuminating thought, but it was followed by a much better idea.

"What do you say to a walk instead?" he demanded. "Just you and me?"

Here was the reward unto the meek.

"Sure you'd rather?" was all Jack was able to reply; then, eagerly: "Do you like chestnut-hunting? I know a peachie grove! Just dandy! But it's kind of a long walk."

"You're on!"

They strapped their skates together and swung off side by side in the short November afternoon. The glory of the roads, the pale, topaz sky, the whipping and crackling of the wind in bare branches, bit into them like acid. Jack was ready to sing with joy, and they did sing, for Stanton's brother was at college, and Stanton was able to teach Jack the words and airs of sacred college songs that Jack had heard of and read of but did not know. They talked of college, then, and careers and the hereafter, and football and books and dreams. They set up ideals and belittled their instructors. Stanton had a plan for an aeroplane, so simple and practical that Jack chafed lest it should be thought of and constructed

THE GREEN C

by a man of more capital before they got home. Jack asked Stanton's advice about what he should invent. Stanton told him that Stapleton had a list of minerals that were not being put to any practical use, so he suggested that Jack should try to find a use for some of them. Jack decided to become a chemist. He described how he had once met Professor Marshfield. Talking it over now, he discovered he really had been more attracted to the old man than he had thought at the time. Perhaps there was fate in it.

It was all but dark when they reached the chestnut grove and gathered up shadowy pocketfuls. It was moonlight when they started home. Stanton's watch showed half past six and after. They undertook the three miles home at a brisk trot.

"Gee whiz," said Jack, "I'll be in wrong if I'm late for supper again!"

"'Phone from my house," said Stanton, "it's nearer; or, I'll tell you"—a bright idea struck him—"stay at my place for supper."

The luminous spheres above them, choiring to the young-eyed cherubim, had nothing on Jack. He half demurred, then:

"I guess I had better," he said. "Thanks. I'll 'phone first."

Stanton's little mother was not waiting

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

supper for him when they arrived at a quarter past seven. Moreover, in the brightly lighted dining-room there was a crowd which Jack quaked to see, as he took his stand at the 'phone in the hall.

"You've got company," he said. "I'd better say I'll be right over home."

"Nonsense!"

A miracle had happened to Stanton; some of his age had dropped from him and some of his ease, as he stood in the full glow of the yellow electric lights.

"That's just us," he declared. "We're rather a large family."

He went into the dining-room; and Jack, at the 'phone, had the benefit of two irate mothers at once.

"Your father's worried to death," came through the receiver.

"Saturday night!" exclaimed the dining-room.

"Anything but skating; you know how nervous we are about—"

"Well, he'll have to do with scraps, and not much of them, at this hour of—"

"At Stantons'! Utter strangers! You impose upon Mrs. Stanton at this time of night!"

"No, Harry; I'll speak just as loud as I

THE GREEN C

wish. Robert ought to be more considerate. He's old enough now—"

"Very well; but come home right after supper, and be sure you apologize to Mrs. Stanton for all the trouble and inconvenience—"

"—you needn't let him starve in the hall, anyway!"

The receiver went up, and Bub Stanton reappeared, a new Stanton to Jack, strangely diminished, quiet, shy, subdued.

"Come in," he said, with a weak attempt at a swagger.

"Say," whispered Jack, "if you're not sure—I'd—I'd—rather—"

"Aw, come on." Stanton took him affectionately by the arm. But Jack did not thrill to this mark of comradeship. He was too full of other feelings.

Stanton had three brothers, a sister, and a couple of parents; but if any one had told Jack there were only six around the table, he would not have hesitated to call such mathematics faulty.

"Come in, come in," said Mrs. Stanton, quickly, "and don't judge us by this meal. Robert never can remember the days of the week. We dine at midday on Saturdays, so fear you will get only a light supper."

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

"Bobby's lucky we have anything at all," laughed one of the brothers. "Mother's boasting about our eats. Now Bobbie, I've left a whole potato here for you, if you want it."

Bub Stanton shrank and shrank. Jack turned away his eyes.

"Well," said Bub's sister, cheerfully, "it's hard to remember when you're skating or playing ball, isn't it? I used to be the same."

"I suppose your mother has as much trouble as the rest of us?" said Mrs. Stanton. "You neglect your family, too, in the football season."

Jack writhed. His food choked him. The pyre was alight, the Rhine was rising, Valhalla was crumbling like sand. For, though being exalted to the gods may be an incentive to martyrdom, the leveling of the gods is unspeakable.

Through the corner of his eye he saw "Bobbie," not Bub Stanton, doubled over his plate, his ears scarlet, his eyes lowered, his voice still. He hated the Stantons as a race of giants who crushed his world even as they sought to put him at his ease with gentle raillery. They meant kindly, and he could not know that they only lacked perspective. Even Parker Stanton, who went to college, saw all high-school inmates now as "boys."

THE GREEN C

"Nice child, the little Downing; but shy as a collie," was Sister Stanton's sum-up. "Maybe he heard you, mother."

"Boys don't lose their appetites that way," answered Mrs. Stanton. "They ate too many chestnuts. Bobbie hardly touched his supper either."

Outside on the veranda, in the frosty moonlight, the two boys were shaking hands. Bub was quiet with the dignity of the vanquished, and Jack felt something warmer and fuller than any worship surging in his breast. They had said good night, and Jack was starting off, when he heard a little whistle, and in the husky staccato, absolutely reserved for one period of a boy's life: "Jack! I say, you Jack!"

"Hello! What's up, Bub?"

He went back up the silvery path to the crackling vines, unconscious of the tenderness in his own voice.

"Say, Jack—listen. Meet me Monday—after school."

Then black silence, and their hands met in a bone-fracturing grip that lasted till Stanton withdrew with a sudden passionate shyness and backed into the shadows of the porch.

"Night, Jackie!" he sang out, cheerfully.

"Night, Bub!" Jack's voice cracked.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

Many emotions had made this day memorable to him, but this was the strangest of all, for beyond unendurable pain was awakening joy. He trudged on his ringing way home, feeling that twilight had come and gone, that night was passing, and a hint of quiet dawn was in the air.

IX

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

“DOWNING!”

It was lunch-time on Monday, and Jack looked up from his daily squabble with Cartwright to answer his name. The more or less awed whisper among his classmates that it was Bub Stanton, who stood at the door, filled him with a sense of superiority to those who were still in ignorance of the fact that the great Bub Stanton was mortal. Cartwright alone failed to be impressed.

“Who?—Stanton?” he asked.

Miskell nodded, glowing in the reflected glory of being a friend of a friend of the celebrity.

“My brother says this Stanton—Bub—isn’t a patch on what his brother Parker used to be. My brother knew Park Stanton very intimately. He’s at college now—Stanton’s brother.”

Meantime Jack had met Stanton at the class-room door, and was honored by having

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

Bub take him confidentially by the arm and draw him excitedly into the long hall.

"Say," exclaimed Bub, "listen! I wanted you to meet me and come home with me this afternoon so's I could show you the model of that aeroplane I spoke of, but I sha'n't be able to do it now. I'll tell you—" he looked around the hall as one about to impart secrets of importance, and lowered his voice. "You're not to say a word yet, but I want to tell you, because then you'll understand about this afternoon, and I guess it will tickle you, too. Listen—"

"What?" Jack strained his ears to be able to catch Bub's lightest whisper. But half of Bub's extreme caution was nervous exuberance.

"I—I— Tin Pan Cauldwell has written the Christmas play."

Jack tried to look properly delighted with this news, but Tin Pan had never been much to him, save the name of a paragon, whose chief virtue consisted in being a favored satellite of Bub Stanton's.

"Gee! He's a wonder!" he said, mustering up his enthusiasm.

"Yes, listen!" Apparently, from Bub's excited voice, the really important part had not come yet. "I—I—wrote it with him."

THE GREEN C

"You!" There was no need to simulate joy now. Jack almost shouted this.

"Hush!" But Stanton's face was beaming. "They're not to know till Doc Hall announces it officially in chapel to-morrow."

"Oh, say!" gasped Jack, trying to control his feelings. "Can't I even tell Miskell?"

"Yes, but wait till after school. Say, listen." Bub Stanton halted again. "There were sixteen plays submitted, and ours was chosen."

"Oh, Cæsar! That's great! That's slick! Honest, I'm awful glad. I—I could just yell! Can't I even shake hands on it?"

Their hands met, and Jack, who, after all, had three years' growth before him ere his hand would become as big and horny as his friend's, was a little sorry for a moment that he had suggested this particular form of congratulation.

"So you see," said Stanton, "Tin Pan and I will have to stay in for a while this afternoon and talk it over with old Kempsy." Kemp was the head of the English department, who judged and censured these plays.

"Sure," nodded Jack, with sparkling eyes.

"Then we've got to get to work on it in dead earnest and put it into shape. They have to start rehearsals right away."

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

"I bet you wrote it all, and Cauldwell just helped a little," said Jack, from the bottom of his heart.

"Oh no—honest!" Bub assured him, quickly. "We each did about the same. Oh, it's a great play!" he added, without false modesty. "It's the best we ever had! Say, listen!" Another careful glance around for eavesdroppers. "Don't breathe a word of this, not even to what's-his-name."

"Miskell?"

"Yes. No, I'd better not tell you. I oughtn't."

"Aw yes, go on! I'll cross my heart, I'll swear, I'll say anything you want me to, to promise I won't ever even think of it again."

"Just swear, then."

"I do."

"Well, listen. There are pirates in it."

"O—oo! Honest?"

Stanton nodded swiftly.

"That was my idea. The whole faculty is a band of pirates, and they've captured the students—see? That's all I'm going to say. And remember, you've sworn. Not a soul."

The bell interrupted Stanton from revealing any more of the plot. Jack, feeling obsessed with tremendous news and a little doubtful as

THE GREEN C

to his ability to contain it, re-entered his class-room.

It was the custom at Cleveland to allow the students to burlesque the faculty and their school life annually in a Christmas play, well edited and pruned by the head of the English department. Boys singly or in groups would work up and submit scenarios during the week before Thanksgiving, and the Tuesday after was always the day of judgment.

Jack could hardly wait for the announcement in chapel in his desire to boast to Cartwright that Bub Stanton had told him before it had been officially made public and as soon as he knew it himself. But when the time came Jack realized that his friendship with Stanton was something more than merely a matter to brag about to the less fortunate, and he said nothing about it.

"Great Scott! but Cauldwell's a wonder!" was Cartwright's tactful ejaculation when they returned from chapel. It drew the expected fire from Miskell but left Jack lofty and unmoved.

It was not until Friday afternoon that Jack was able to see Bub Stanton for more than a hurried moment at a time. Even from these unsatisfactory glimpses he could gather that something was troubling Bub, though the

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

senior did not tell him anything more definite than that they were having some difficulty casting the play.

Friday afternoon, however, they had the time and surroundings for indulging comfortably in confidences. After they had examined the aeroplane, simpler in theory than in actual construction, and had given each other hundreds of good reasons why it was the best thing yet invented along these lines, they sat back in big chairs and talked about school, which at this season of the year really meant the Christmas play.

"But here's an awful mess," said Bub, leaning forward and speaking intimately. "I'd just made *Cap'n Maul*, the pirate chief, you know, for Graham. That is, maybe not exactly for him, but I had him in mind all along. He'd make a peach of a groucho, and *Cap'n Maul* is—oh, he's just a winner for that! I wonder how Kempsey allowed us to keep all we did in the play. He's supposed to be Doc Hall, you see, when the old man has his feathers up. And there's one part—" Stanton stopped short and reddened. "It's beastly, not being able to tell, but it isn't fair to Tin Pan if I do. I'd told you all about the pirates before, though, so that much doesn't matter."

THE GREEN C

"And I haven't even mentioned them to myself since," answered Jack, quickly. "Honest, I've never breathed it!"

"But I won't tell any more, anyway, on account of Tin Pan. Just stop me when I start to." Jack promised. "Then, as I was saying, I sort of had my eye peeled for Graham, and Tin Pan agreed with me. We kind of wanted to offer a big part to Graham as long as it fitted him so well, and he's been—oh, well, you know the way the soreheads have been acting since that resignation business. But when we put it up to the class presidents they kicked and said they knew there'd be a lot of hard feeling if Graham got it. Well, we had a regular young Senate scene and got up and made speeches for and against, and finally Tin Pan and I convinced them that it was our play and we knew best who would do for the characters we'd made up. It was a swell debate. There's a lot in debating when you're not doing it in a literary society and you know what you're talking about."

"It must have been slick," assented Jack, with glowing eyes. "So you got Graham in it?"

"Wait a minute. Some underhand little beast went around blabbing about the kind of a fight it had been. Naturally, Graham

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

turned us down faster than we could blink. And if you've ever tried to move a house by pushing it you'll know what it's like to try to make Graham change his mind. Even so, we might have managed it if the fellers hadn't shown how glad they were that he kept out of it. Oh, but we were sore!"

"What a sloppy trick!"

"We got our dander up then, and we fixed it between us to veto every man they put up for *Maul*, so they'd have to take Graham. You see, the authors have to agree to the choice. Cæsar, but that was a funny meeting!" Stanton chuckled at the remembrance. "Solemn old Pritchard, the president of the year, bringing up man after man, and we, sitting there knocking them as if we hated 'em all. 'How's Elliott?' Pritchard would yell, thinking he'd caught us because Elliott's on the team. 'Rotten!' we'd holler. 'Foster, then?' 'Punk!' 'Marks?' 'Awful!' He even put up Fatty Phelps! Finally, when we'd used up all the good actors by fitting them into other parts, we had the play all cast and no *Cap'n Maul*. Just what Tin Pan and I were after."

"You mean that not only would they have to elect Graham, but he'd have to take it?" Jack glowed at this strategy.

THE GREEN C

"Yep. We simply histed it onto Graham. And what do you think he did?"

"What?" asked Jack, breathless.

"He got up a campaign to elect Tin Pan as *Maul*. That finished us."

"But I thought the authors couldn't take part in it?" Jack had learned this when he had asked Bub what part he was going to take.

"As a rule, they can't; but under special conditions they're allowed."

"Tin Pan refused, of course?"

"Well," Stanton hesitated, "you see, it was getting late, and we thought the play would go to smash if we didn't do something, and Tin Pan is a marvel. We didn't want to gum up the parade any longer with our obstinacy. Then we weren't giving in to them, and, as a matter of fact, they really were giving in to Graham. See? But I'd like to get hold of that small rat that first shot off his mouth about what happened in the presidents' meeting, and put Graham wise."

Of course the details of this political controversy soon became known all over the school, and the boys now turned against Graham as a "piker" for not taking the part offered him. The defenders of big Graham, as usual, had their hands full.

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

As the days drew nearer to Christmas and the rehearsals progressed, the boys forgot everything but the coming holidays and the frolics that were to precede them. Even Graham, as a public enemy, was fast being overlooked. Time had been wasted that could not be made up, and double work fell upon the members of the cast, who went about looking fagged and worn under the unaccustomed strain.

Christmas day fell on Friday, and the Sunday afternoon before Jack met Bub Stanton coming out of Tin Pan Cauldwell's house. He noticed that the senior looked flushed and troubled.

"Hello!" called Jack.

Bub started at the sound of his voice, and a strange expression of anxiety combined with hope passed over his face.

"Hello!" he returned. "Which way are you going?"

"Nowhere, special. That is, I'm on my way home now. Why? Can I do anything for you?"

"No." Stanton's extraordinary manner increased. "No; I guess not, thanks."

"Is anything the matter?" demanded Jack. Stanton hesitated.

"Listen," he said, haltingly, "Tin Pan's sick."

THE GREEN C

"Sick!" echoed Jack, horrified. "What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know." Stanton rubbed up his hair. "But he looks awful."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. And he's worrying all the time about the play."

"I should think he would," declared Jack, sympathetically. "Why, it's not a week off. What would happen if he couldn't take part?"

"It would go to smash," answered Stanton, promptly. "He has the chief part. They say he'll get brain-fever if he goes on worrying, too."

"Graham!" exclaimed Jack, suddenly.

"What on earth—" Stanton looked at him as though he feared for his sanity.

"Find Graham right away!" suggested Jack, excitedly. "Tell him, and I'll bet he'll do it."

"What! Learn a whole part in a couple of days? The play is on Thursday! Oh no! It's not likely, the way he's been refusing all along."

Jack's face fell.

"Then *you* must try it," he ventured.

"Not on your life. I can't act worth a cent, and I've got enough to do running the blessed thing. No thanks! That's out of the question."

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

"Then it's got to be Graham," said Jack, after a pause. "Hasn't it? Oh, say, I'm sure he'd do it if you put it up to him right."

Stanton eyed Jack speculatively.

"I wonder if we could," he mused, aloud. "Now, I think there is one way we might. He likes you, and maybe you could handle him. He's—well, he's sort of suspicious of Tin Pan and me. He might think it was just a—well, a trick. But if you went maybe—"

"I don't see why he should pay more attention to me than he would to you," said Jack, modestly. "But I can try—if you'd like."

"If you would!" exclaimed Stanton, fervently. "Then I could go back and tell Tin Pan it's all right. Here, I've got the part with me; and if Graham takes it, make him begin to study right away for to-morrow's rehearsal. There's an awful lot for him to do!"

"What can I tell him is the matter with Tin Pan?" Jack suddenly began to waver.

"We don't know yet."

"Hasn't he had the doctor?" asked Jack. "Say! You'd better not go near him till he does. He might be having scarlet fever or measles or something."

"They were just going to have the doctor

THE GREEN C

when I left. Tell Graham it looked contagious," said Stanton. "That paper is a copy I had in my own house, so it's all right," he added, hastily.

"I'm not afraid," said Jack, scornfully. "I'll beat it right on to Graham's. But don't you go too near Tin Pan till you find out what's the trouble, anyway."

"Don't worry; I'll just stop back and tell his mother, so's he won't worry any more." Stanton turned back. "And remember," he added, from the pathway, "the whole play depends on you, now."

"Good-by." Jack blushed under this tribute. "Gosh, he's a fine sort," he mused, as he trudged off.

It was with some trepidation that he at last faced Graham.

"Tin Pan Cauldwell's sick," he began. "Did you know it?"

"Tin Pan!" exclaimed Graham. "Why, I saw him yesterday! What's the trouble with him?"

"I don't know. Bub Stanton told me. The doctor hadn't come when he left. But he says it looks contagious and that poor Tin Pan is feeling awful. He's so worried over the play."

Graham looked at him searchingly, and Jack squirmed under his gaze.

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

"Bub Stanton," he blurted out, "said that you wouldn't take the part in the play if Cauldwell can't, and I said you would."

"Me?" repeated Graham, uncomfortably, regardless of grammar. "Oh, Tin Pan ain't so sick as all that."

"Yes, yes; he is!" contradicted Jack, quickly. "He has fever, and Bub says they're scared it may turn to brain-fever, if he worries. Bub was all up in the air about it. He looks as if he might get sick over it, too."

"Did he suggest me?" asked Graham, in a manner that unnerved Jack. He did not know the right answer, so he decided to tell the truth.

"No—I did. You see, I—I—don't think he knows quite what a good sport—you are," he stammered, shyly.

Graham remained silent a moment.

"Isn't there any one else?" he asked, finally.

"You know what trouble they had before they decided on Tin Pan." Jack took hope from his tone. "And look how little time there is!"

There was another long pause.

"Where's my—where's Tin Pan's part?" demanded Graham at last, gruffly.

Here was Graham's chance to make good,

THE GREEN C

and he took it. The story spread about the high school like wildfire that Tin Pan had fallen ill on the eve of his play, and big Graham had consented to be his substitute. Graham's enemies denied this rumor till it was proven by the fact that Tin Pan was absent and some of the boys had even visited at his bedside. Stanton reported daily on his case to the school at large: "Not well enough to get up yet." A fear arose that poor Cauldwell would not live even to hear of the success of the play. Boys began to speak of him reverently, and in awe, as the best student and the most popular boy Cleveland ever had harbored. His epitaphs were ready for him, but he did not die.

Graham called at his house regularly, always to be met with the news, "Better, but very weak." Once he was permitted to see Tin Pan, who lay languid through the interview and seemed exhausted at the close. According to Bub Stanton, his illness had been diagnosed as a general collapse after a nervous strain. People began to beg Bub himself to be careful.

Wednesday Cauldwell was said to be so much better that they hoped with care to allow him to be present at the play, and it was like him that he was able to pull through in

A QUESTION OF ACTORS

the very nick of time. The students felt somehow that his recovery was due to his own efforts, and many wondered if he had the right to force himself in this way.

Graham rose to the occasion, having been put on his mettle, and astonished the school not only by having learned his part in three days, but by outdoing all the rest of the cast, so far as acting went. It turned the tide of popularity in his direction. His enemies admitted that Cauldwell could have done no better and they "had to hand it to him." When the curtain fell and the cheers were given, the cry for Graham was only second to that for Tin Pan Cauldwell.

"Gee! but doesn't Tin Pan look fine! You wouldn't think he'd been sick at all," exclaimed Miskell to Jack, when it was all over and they were crowding close upon the authors to congratulate them.

A great light began to dawn upon Jack. As soon as he was able he cornered Bub and put to him a leading question. He was especially interested because of his hand in the affair.

"Bub, just what is a general collapse?"

"It's awful," said Bub, seriously. "It's a disease actors often get."

They were interrupted by a new cheer that

THE GREEN C

arose as Graham crossed the chapel in the trappings of *Cap'n Maul*. Through it they heard the gratifying calls: "Graham!" "Yea, you old Walt!" "Big Maul Graham!" "Oh you pirate!"

"Listen," whispered Bub. "That's the best little cure for it I know."

"You mean—"

"But if Graham ever finds it out—whee!—it 'll lose its whole effect!"

"Wasn't—didn't—"

"Sure! Tin Pan nearly died lying in bed there almost a week. He was so bored he played dominoes."

"But how did he come to think of just that?"

"We had it cooked up from the start. It was Graham's nonsense that first put it into our heads. He thought he was so clever making Tin Pan take the part! We never could have done it if he hadn't. You're right, Tin Pan can act! He was some invalid, believe me." Bub grinned shamelessly, "O-oh, sa-ay!" he drawled, delightedly, "don't talk to me about Christmas plays!"

X

THE HOLIDAY

“A WHOLE week to rest in,” said Jack, the Sunday night after Christmas. “No school in the morning—no school all week! Oh, say! The only trouble is it goes too quickly,” he added, with a touch of sadness, facing the worst in the midst of his delight.

“Yes,” assented Edie, sympathetically. “There is so much you want to do during the week, and you never get the chance to do more than half of it.”

“Well, I don’t want to do anything,” yawned Jack. “I’m through doing for a while; I’m going to loaf. And if any one wakes me and tries to make me get up to-morrow morning I’m going to throw things at ’em.” He was looking at Emily, whose ungrateful task it was to see that her brother was out of bed in time to get to school. She appeared to be reading, but her eyes rose like little moons over the edge of the book at Jack’s insinuation.

THE GREEN C

"You shall sleep," she declared, firmly. "It means a holiday for me, too. Perhaps you think I *like* going in and waking you."

As though this had been an evil spell put upon him by an insulted fairy, inclined to mischief-making, Jack did sleep. He slept the round of the clock, and woke with the winter sun in his room and the house unusually still. He studiously avoided looking at the time, and lay around in bed dozing and stretching to his heart's content. Once he heard the door-bell ring, several times he listened to the trades-wagons drive through on the frozen road, but nothing disturbed him. For once in his life he was going to get as much bed as he wanted, and here he discovered that magic truth about this article of furniture—the longer you remain in one the harder it is to leave it.

Finally he arose and dressed slowly, and only upon entering the deserted dining-room deigned for the first time to look at the clock. It was twenty minutes to twelve!

He was in dread of having Mary come in to clear away his lone breakfast things, to set the table for lunch, thereby cheating him out of a meal; so he sat down quickly, and uncovered his dishes. Everything had that cold, dead look of a fossilized repast of pre-

THE HOLIDAY

historic man. The sound of washing going on in the kitchen was a warning to him from that direction. He hesitated some time before he was able to gather up sufficient courage to take his coffee-cup in to Annie to have it refilled with something more suited to the temperature of the morning. He had, with boy-like fortitude, swallowed iced eggs and oatmeal glacé, and he felt the need of something warm in him to quell the doubts that arose whenever he thought of this gastronomic triumph.

In the kitchen, however, his darkest fears were verified. Whatever sparks of good humor she possessed Annie always quenched in the seething tubs on wash-day.

"Is it coffee for breakfast ye're after at this hour? An' me up before sunrise to get a bit of washin' done so's to be able to have *lunch* for ye in time! An' where'd ye think I'd be keepin' coffee on a stove the like of that? With a wash-boiler the size of a house itself on top of it, filled up with wash I can't see me hands gettin' through this blessed day. Why couldn't you be coomin' down with dacint people, the way ye'd get yer breakfast at the proper hour? Is it on Monday mornin' that ye come botherin' me as if I was idlin' away me time with no

THE GREEN C

thought but to attind on youse? Coffee, says you!"

Jack vanished unwarmed.

By this time the doubts concerning his breakfast became more or less of a certainty. He wondered if missing a meal would have been such a hardship after all. He felt it was absolutely necessary to get his mind off cold eggs and porridge.

At this moment Emily came in looking so obstreperously cheerful and rosy in her becoming Christmas furs that Jack in his present state of mind may be pardoned for taking it as a personal affront.

"Hello!" she exclaimed. "Up, Jackie?"

"No, I'm still asleep in bed, can't you see?" snapped Jack. "And my name is *Jack*."

"So, ho, Jackie," said his sister, imperturbably. "Rest doesn't seem to agree with our Jackie's temper."

"*Jack*, I tell you," corrected Jack, angrily.

"Or have they been telling you what you've been missing by your slothfulness?" Emily diplomatically steered clear of a noisy skirmish by avoiding the name entirely.

"What do you mean?" Jack's curiosity was pricked.

"Your little friend what's - his - name—Murphy—"

THE HOLIDAY

"Miskell," Jack interrupted, indignantly.

"Yes, Miskell, he was here, and he wanted you to go skating with him."

"Skating? Is there skating?"

"There is, indeed. Or there was. It's much milder now, so it's probably thawing."

"I'll beat it over there now."

"Hardly worth while. It's twelve already, and we have lunch at one." Jack shuddered at the thought.

"I don't want any lunch," he declared.

"That's so, you must have just finished breakfast. But other people are hungry, especially after skating. You'll get over there just in time to see them all going home to eat."

"I don't care," answered Jack, sullenly. "I'm going anyway. Where's Edie?"

"You'll probably find her over there. She went with Nellie Joyce. And you'd better remind her to come home."

Jack struggled into his outdoor things, hunted up his skates, and departed.

The minute the sharp air blew upon him the cold breakfast seemed to respond and set him shivering. He did not see how Emily could have used such a word as "mild" in connection with this sort of weather. Gray clouds were gathering, causing the sun to play

THE GREEN C

an aggravating game of hide-and-seek with poor, chilled mortals like Jack, who desired its warmth.

It was nearly half past twelve when Jack reached the lake; and, as Emily had predicted, the skaters were already beginning to leave, their going hastened by the threatening sky. A little group of high-school boys, composed of Tin Pan Cauldwell, Graham, Bub Stanton, and Fatty Phelps, passed him on the other side of the street.

"Hello, Downing! You're late!"

"I know it," answered Jack, trying not to sound as sore as he felt at having it rubbed in. "Ice any good?"

"Fine!" was the answer in chorus; to which Tin Pan supplemented. "Gettin' a bit slushy, now, though. You'd better hurry."

"Coming back this afternoon?" asked Jack.

"Nix—had enough. Kind of cold," came the various excuses, and Bub Stanton motioned to the clouds. "There ain't a-goin' to be no afternoon," he misquoted, with a cheerful spirit of prophecy.

They all went on their way whistling and taking with them most of the charm of skating, so far as Jack was concerned.

Of course, Miskell was probably there still, and some others of his classmates, like

THE HOLIDAY

Salle and Cameron and Jennings. Even Cartwright, with whom Jack quarreled regularly every day, would be some one—Jack rather enjoyed his differences with Cartwright. But by the time Jack had put on his skates and started out, the ice was emptied of all familiar and congenial faces. He skated around three times in a vain search for Edie. The idea had come to him to detain her with the false report that lunch was to be excessively late. Thus he might have her company for a while and annoy Emily at the same time. After all, Edie was more entertaining than no one, and she had a most gratifying appreciation of his good skating. But these wicked plans were frustrated by the fact that Edie already had gone home in quest of food.

When he got back to the house lunch was over. Emily was for letting him do without any, since he had deliberately disregarded her admonishings and had declared that he wasn't going to eat anything anyway. Emily thought he ought to be disciplined; but, fortunately, mothers are kinder. Skating after a breakfast such as Jack had eaten is not conducive to bodily comfort.

In the afternoon the clouds of the morning made good their warning, and, though they

THE GREEN C

could not decide upon whether it should snow or rain, they made a very creditable attempt at doing both at the same time. This dismal mixture Jack watched from the parlor windows, then from the dining-room, then from the library, then up-stairs to the windows in his own room, then in Edie's room, then his mother's and again down-stairs to the parlor, and so on the rounds of the house—an aimless, profitless, hopeless proceeding that drove the more active members of his family nearly frantic. He envied Edith, who was so busily making favors for the little party she was to give next day; and even Emily and his mother seemed happy over some stupid sewing. It is strange what things can occupy women! To cap it all, the volcanic Annie was singing in the kitchen—a sign that she, too, was content, with the end of her day's work in sight.

Jack came to the conclusion that in work alone lay salvation and delight, and his last day of idleness upon this earth was spent.

“Did you tell Mary to wake you up to-morrow morning?” asked Emily, coming into the library that evening, just before supper, having finished helping Mary set the table.

Jack reddened.

“Yes,” he answered, shortly.

Emily's eyes twinkled.

THE HOLIDAY

"Why didn't you ask me, as you always do?" she demanded.

"Because," said Jack, promptly, "I want to be waked long before you think of getting up."

"Well, I pity Mary," said Emily, with feeling.

Her sympathy was wasted. Once Jack had made up his mind, he was determined to stand by his resolutions, if only to spite his elder sister. So he rose scarcely fifteen minutes after Mary's knock and her timid "It's half past six, Mister Jack."

He was out by a little after seven, and tried to believe he was enjoying the brisk walk in the gray, forbidding morning through the broken and frozen puddles left by yesterday's sleet. He came back a great deal sooner than he had planned. A good half-hour stood between him and breakfast-time, and in desperation, driven from virtue by dread of Annie and the sound of her thumping irons—it being Tuesday—and his Monday's lesson was fresh in his memory, Jack betook himself to the ice-box on the porch, seeking what he might devour.

It appeared in the form of a large, unusually rich sort of chocolate cake, known to the initiated as "brownstone front." Occasions

THE GREEN C

have little meaning at Jack's age, and time has no conventions. Jack proceeded to eat a good three-quarters of it with less than a fleeting thought on the possibility of another *ménu* being more appropriate to the hour.

"Getting up early doesn't seem to agree with you much better than lying in bed late," remarked Emily, when Jack refused oatmeal and confined himself merely to eggs and coffee.

"Well, I've had my breakfast already, Smarty," retorted Jack.

"You did?" His mother looked astonished. "On ironing day! What did Annie give you?"

"She didn't give me anything. I got it for myself."

"Oh-ho," said Edie, admiringly, "Jack's getting clever. What did you have, Jack?"

"Chocolate cake," replied Jack, with no thought of concealment.

"What!" cried every one.

"Chocolate cake!" repeated Edith, rising from her chair with a most extraordinary expression on her face. "Where did you get it?"

"In the ice-box. Why?"

"You nasty, greedy, wicked boy!" Edie stamped her foot in her fury, then burst into tears. "Oh, mother! Annie made it specially for the girls this afternoon!"

"Never mind, I'll buy you another," apolo-

THE HOLIDAY

gized Jack, easily, conscious of his Christmas money still burning in his pocket.

"No, you can't! You can't *buy* them!" sobbed Edie. "They're a special kind all filled up with caramel and nuts, and they take days to make!"

"It was awfully good," conceded Jack, meekly, trying to be tactful.

"You—you—you are just—a—a—an animal!" burst out Edie, weeping afresh.

"Don't tease her," interposed his mother. "You certainly did very wrong, Jack, and I am surprised at you. Edie has every right to be thoroughly annoyed. But, Edith, my child, you needn't take it so tragically. I'll see that you get a cake to replace it that will be just as good."

"It can't be just as good." Edie still cried copiously. "Nothing can be just as good. I was boasting to them about it. Only Annie knows how to make it here. It was one reason why I was giving my p—party!"

"Oh, I left enough for them to sample it," exclaimed Jack, eagerly, in all good-will, which caused a fresh explosion; and Emily assisted him to the door.

"For goodness' sake go away and leave her alone. Haven't you done enough to the poor child?" she scolded.

THE GREEN C

Jack went up-stairs feeling very much hurt. After all, what had he done that was so wicked? Ate a little cake! And the more he had tried to apologize and show that he was sorry, the worse they seemed to think of him. Very well, then, he wouldn't say another word to comfort Edie again. He was glad he had eaten her old cake, at least—a slight heaviness made him change the form of his thought—he was glad most of it was gone. So she cared more about her old chocolate cake than her starving brother! And his mother and Emily taking sides with her! Women are all alike. They are so interested in such petty things, and they judge before hearing two sides of a case.

At this moment Jack's father entered the room, dressed to go out. He had not been present at the scene in the dining-room, having been occupied with an early business visitor in the library at the time.

“What do you mean by teasing Edith and making her cry?” he inquired sternly. “These tricks may seem very funny to you at the time, but they are thoughtless and unmanly, and when you grow to have a little sense I promise you will regret them. I really believed that I might expect my son to have a little consideration for his sister. There is

THE HOLIDAY

nothing so despicable as the man who finds humor in a woman's tears, even if it is only a little matter that doesn't seem to have any importance to him. Never let me hear of anything like this again."

It was the last straw. Jack felt that he was doomed to be misunderstood.

He spent the morning in gloomy confinement in his room voluntarily. He devoted himself to his chemistry note-book that was fast becoming a matter of great importance to him since he had decided at Bub Stanton's suggestion to go in for chemistry. But somehow even these things palled this morning. He wondered bitterly to himself how his family would misconstrue this harmless studiousness.

"I s'pose they'd think I was learning how to blow up the house," he mused, sulkily.

At lunch-time he was so silent and sullen himself that he did not notice that Edith wasn't on speaking terms with him. It was a dull and ghastly meal.

In the afternoon Jack decided to do something active. It was thawing out, and the sky hung low and uninviting, so in a sudden inspiration he discovered the untried art of interior decorating. His room could so easily respond to a little treatment.

THE GREEN C

It was in line with his present luck that the parlor was situated directly beneath him, and in the parlor Edie was entertaining her girl friends with gentle and lady-like writing games. When the thunders of moving furniture were let loose above, several of the girls looked up in amazement and alarm. Edie, when apart from Jack's influence, was painfully conventional. A party to the tune of house-moving was an incongruity that pained her. Moreover, she well knew the plan of the house and the relation of Jack's room to the floor below, and it struck her that this might be allied to the chocolate-cake episode. Begging to be excused, she left the room to investigate. Two minutes after there was the loudest thump of all followed by the crash of splintered wood and broken glass and a blood-curdling girlish scream.

"How dreadful!" cried a dark-eyed, pale girl, Edwina Snell, clutching at her companion, a red-faced little lady who was quaking perceptibly. "What do you suppose is happening?"

"It's her brother, Jack," said Nellie Joyce, who was unable to share her chum's sisterly devotion to that individual. "He's terrible. Probably he has knocked her down."

At which there were general exclamations

THE HOLIDAY

of disgust, horror, and indignation, followed by gruesome tales of brotherly cruelty, in the midst of which Edie returned unhurt, though somewhat flushed.

Silence had been restored.

Meantime, Jack, with a plaster on his forehead, was sitting in his mother's room leaning over a book, his thoughts on the chaos in his undecorated room.

What really had happened was that Edie had chosen a very precarious moment for her infuriated entrance into her brother's presence, for he was balanced on the head-board of his bed disentangling a picture wire from an obstinate hook that held it captive to the moulding. His start of surprise upon her angry—"Jackie! What are—" resulted in a catastrophe that cut her short, smashed a picture-frame, broke a chair, ripped off several feet of moulding, and cut open his forehead in a way that set her shrieking and misled the nervous young ladies down-stairs.

Jack's mother came to the rescue, and sent Edie back to her guests. Then, having doctored up her son's wounds, she decided to keep her eye on him for the rest of the afternoon.

When the next day dawned rainy, Jack was exasperated. He determined that neither rain, hail, blizzard, earthquake, nor hurri-

THE GREEN C

cane should keep him about the house another moment. No one dreamed he had gone out till he showed up very late for lunch, drenched to the skin, his teeth chattering, and his face flushed.

"Now, mother," said Emily, as he entered the dining-room, "this is what comes of your being so easy and saving his meals for him when he's late and just catering to his thoughtlessness. Let him go without lunch for once—"

"I don't want anything to eat," returned Jack in a strained voice, and he left the room.

"Jack!" called his mother. "John, come in here."

He came back slowly, and her quick maternal eye saw all that her daughter had missed.

"Where have you been, Jack?"

"Out."

"So I should have imagined. But where?"

"With Miskell; for a walk."

"A walk!" gasped Edie and Emily, their eyes on the window-panes, since they could not for the rain-drops see through them.

"Yes," answered Jack, shivering, "I couldn't stand being in the house any more."

"Well, *I* think—" began Emily, stormily.

"Hush!" interrupted her mother, sharply. She rose and turned to Jack, and, taking him

THE HOLIDAY

by the arm, led him gently to the door. "Bed's the place for you, my son, till you get warmed up a bit," she said, with tender sprightliness. "Emily, ask Annie to give you a nice fresh cup of hot tea, and bring it up to us."

All that evening and night Edith spent in weeping over her heartlessness in having driven Jack out into the rain to his death, perhaps. She decided that should he by some miracle recover, she would devote the rest of her life to making amends. It was her duty as his sister to have made his vacation attractive to him instead of so dangerous a bore. She resolved never to speak to him crossly again.

Emily showed her remorse by giving the kindly inquiring friends the most alarming details of Jack's symptoms, with predictions it was as well Jack did not hear. The next morning the doctor pronounced it a mild tonsillitis aggravated by a very bad case of spoilt stomach.

"Sorry, young man," he had said, genially, to Jack, at the close, "but you'll have to spend the rest of your holiday week in bed. That's what you get for enjoying yourself too much."

A few blocks away Mrs. Miskell was calling up the doctor for her son.

XI

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

FOR the school-bound, January is an evil month, for there seems to be a protracted number of blue Mondays then, strung together and disguised to look like ordinary weeks, till they are smashed with the final calamity of Mark Day.

When Jack returned to high school after the holidays he was warned by four several instructors that four several subjects were tottering so that when the reckoning came on the first of February he might not be overwhelmed with amazement. Jack was taking seven subjects, music and art being counted as two, but it was not in music nor in art that he was so perceptibly unsteady. To be brief, the one subject in which Jack shone, the subject on which he based ninety per cent. of his studying—when he studied—was science, first-year chemistry, thoroughly simplified and more or less denatured, applied to experimental puerility in innocuous

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

doses. Other members of the class found it difficult to keep their note-books on this subject written up to date. Jack possessed two, one an *edition de luxe* for home use and public display, which somehow failed to impress his instructor properly; the other a dull, arbitrary affair that he went to without joy, but perseveringly enough so that the reputation he had made for himself as a chemist should not suffer.

In a weak moment Jack confided the purport of those four warnings to Edie, who in consequence suffered for a few days under the burden of an outraged conscience, until she finally succumbed to her virtue. She let Jack know exactly what she thought he should do, and his opinion on the matter had no weight with her; she was deaf to all argument.

"And if you don't tell father and mother, I shall," she had declared, "and if I tell I shall be a tale-bearer on account of you, and you," she added, with sudden inspiration—"you'll be worse; you'll be a coward."

Jack asked to be allowed to think it over. He took the matter to Miskell, who suggested that he should compromise and own up to two of the warnings.

"Latin and math," figured Miskell, shrewdly. "You see, you can get some sympathy in

THE GREEN C

those. Everybody's bad in Latin, and if you have no head for math they may think you're going to be a poet or something. Most of the really good authors couldn't get the hang of figures at all. Look at Goldsmith."

Jack nodded vaguely, but he was not really comforted. The trouble was that he had *not* looked at Goldsmith all term, so these consoling words meant nothing to him except that it would be worse than useless to try to assume the rôle of dreamy *litterateur* or absent-minded book-worm.

Light came to Jack finally. Common sense, if not ethics, set him right. Four warnings are easier to own up to than four actual failures; and, after all, it was the easiest way of breaking the news of the doom that was to fall upon him when the marks were published in February. His scheming virtue was rewarded. He told the awful truth at table, supported by the adoring light in Edie's eyes; and Emily became so agitated over the disgrace, as she called it, that his parents felt it their duty to be lenient with him, to keep the family poise at a decent average. Moreover, they could not help finding something humorous in such gruesome and wholesale bad scholarship.

"It's incredible!" declared Emily. "A boy of his age ought to have some slight under-

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

standing of his responsibilities. He ought to be made to see that life is a serious matter, and he has his duties. Now when I was fourteen—”

“You’re a girl,” rebutted Jack. “Girls never have anything to think of but their lessons.”

This remark nearly lost him the support of Edie.

Afterward, in the privacy of Edie’s room, where she was vainly endeavoring to do her lessons, Jack set forth his complicated and awe-inspiring plan of campaign.

“Hargrave, the history teacher, you know, is just dippy about maps. I can easily make him a map of Sparta or something. He’d give me an A on that, for effort, and it would boost up my mark a good deal. Then I’ll know my lesson a couple of times and pretend I’m not paying attention so he’ll call on me. He likes to try to catch the fellers napping. And,” he added, not without humility, “he’d never suspect that *I* would know enough to be able to give the right answer.”

School work to Jack, as to many of his friends, was a game played with much finesse between scholar and teacher, with marks for the stakes.

“Ought you to do that?” Edie tried to focus her wandering attention on her book.

THE GREEN C

"Why not?"

"You'd be deceiving him."

"I suppose I'm allowed to sit any way I want so long as I listen? Well, suppose I *do* choose to look up at the ceiling and sit this way—look"—he illustrated elaborately in a chair directly behind Edie, and insisted on drawing her from her work to regard it. "See, I'll just be staring up that way, sort of innocent."

"Oh, I don't care what you do!" Edith bounced round to her books again impatiently. "Only for goodness' sake let me do *my* lessons properly, so I won't have to practise how to fool my teachers into giving me good marks!"

"I thought you were interested," said Jack, rising with great effect.

"I'd be interested enough if I thought you had any plan of learning your lessons decently," answered Edie, primly, but with haste, sorry that she had let her temper nearly rob her of the chance to assist at Jack's reformation.

"Well, I shall be learning." Jack paused at the door. "Won't I have to know the work to be able to do that?"

"And you won't just study one or two answers?"

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

"No, of course not; I couldn't take that risk—and see here—" Jack came back into the room and perched himself on the foot-board of Edie's bed. "I've thought out a dandy way of doing the Latin, too. Hilton loves verbs—irregular ones. I'll make out some beautiful synopses and bring them to him for correction. Or I'll buy a blank-book and keep irregular verbs in it. He gives you credit when he thinks you're trying, and I'm bound to learn my verbs if I write 'em a lot."

"Um," said Edie, doubtfully, "I don't understand anything about Latin, but I can't imagine even a dead language being all verbs."

"Of course not, but they're the hardest part of it," answered Jack, quickly; "and as for algebra, that's easy. Every day there are two or three extra problems in the home-work, and you'd get credit for them if you did 'em."

"But you won't let that take time from your regular home-work," begged Edie.

"Pooh! Nobody ever does the regular home-work."

"Then I think *you* ought to!"

"What good would it do? They never call for it, and I can't go and put it on his desk like extra work, expecting credit for it."

Edie gave up trying to find out what was rotten in the state of Denmark, as Jack went

THE GREEN C

on, carried away by his own fluent inventiveness.

"In English you can get credit for outside reading. We're doing *The Deserted Village* now. I'll find out some other of Goldsmith's and read it. If we bring in a synopsis of another book it means a big A. And all I need is a couple of A's in any subject. Now, let's see, that's English, Latin, history, and math. Chemistry I'm not a bit scared of, and music and art are safe, too. Now I'll go and plan out how long I can put in on each subject. I'll make out a programme and put it over my desk, and you can bet I'll stick to it."

It must have afforded Jack tremendous artistic satisfaction to discover how his scheme of preoccupation drew fire from his history instructor at its first trial. Only it is most regrettable that, though the manoeuvre was planned, the occasion was not, and Jack was really caught napping, dreaming of note-books and tablets to be purchased as ammunition in the onslaughts upon the good graces of his instructors.

"Another zip," he speculated, in the vernacular, as he took his seat. This simply means that he had wasted valuable time in the construction of the programme. "Well,

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

I'll make a map of Crete for that, and color it so it 'll look careful. Yes, sir." He rose again, his face scarlet.

"Can you repeat what Cameron just told us?"

"No, sir; I didn't hear very well," stammered Jack, and beheld another mark go down beside his name.

"Cameron, repeat it."

That is how Jack never forgot the laws of Solon.

That afternoon he purchased a sheet of drawing-paper and a box of paints. At half past ten that night he knocked on Edie's door and woke her out of her first sleep to admire the completed map of Crete, a gigantesque affair, reminiscent in color of the pre-Raphaelites.

Edie was not in the mood to appreciate esthetic geography.

"How about your other lessons?" she yawned, a slave to morality.

"Chem is first hour. Then I have a study-hour to do my Latin in."

"Was this your history for to-morrow?"

"We haven't got history for to-morrow," returned Jack, loftily. "Oh, say, wait till you see this in the morning!" Jack withdrew, disgusted at her lack of interest. "You'll look up and take notice then!"

THE GREEN C

The next morning it was he who looked up and took notice. Owing to the yellow gas-light, he had slipped into the natural error of coloring all the water on the map a violent emerald-green.

It was a pity to waste so much map, so he took it to his instructor, but with a painful, apologetic attitude in place of the grand air of college benefactor he had intended to assume. It was not the hit it should have been. A vague plan arose in his mind for the drawing of a map twice its size. He determined to look up his history and find out one that would be appropriate and timely. The consequence was that he used up his study period in the perusal of his history, and Latin hour fell upon him at least thirty-five minutes before he expected it, smiting him with the sense of being completely hollow and heavily dented in the region of his stomach.

His signal failure in the classics banished history from his thoughts, and that night, over his newly started verb-book, he discovered that there were several too many tenses and two too many modes in the language of ancient Rome.

From this time on Jack's life was full. He scarcely had time to admire his own work,

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

or to draw Edie's attention to its merits. Even his study periods in school were devoted to the furtherance of his cunning designs, and what mattered a few poor zips in class when they readily could be overbalanced by volunteer A's?

Hargrave was inundated with ancient-history maps that went the cycle of the development of art from early Egyptian brilliancy of color to the harmonious Japanesque effects of the school of Whistler. It puzzled Hargrave and flattered him. He was of an older generation, and as mercenary with marks as any of the boys he tried to teach. He paid for the maps lavishly with A's. He began to see an interest on Jack's part that had been imperceptible before. He often called on that person to volunteer in class, and half supplied the answer himself.

Hilton, too, was touched by Jack's effort to master Latin verbs.

"Why didn't you tell me you were having difficulty?" he asked. "Now, if we come to anything in class you don't understand, let me know. I do like to see a boy try to get things for himself; but, after all, your master is here to help you."

And help he did. He called on Jack carefully and tenderly, and gave him credit for

THE GREEN C

the things he had been expected to know two months past.

McNaughton, in mathematics, was frankly disturbed when Jack volunteered a problem and got it right. With the marks that trailed after Jack's name in the day-book, this seemed nothing short of uncanny. Daily, thereafter, neat extra problems rested on his desk, showing that here was a student with a positive passion for numbers. McNaughton was essentially mathematical. When he got through giving Jack points for outside work, he found that Jack had more marks to his name than any other boy in the class, so he stopped calling on him for a while.

It was only with English that Jack encountered snags. Perhaps in the quieter days of our grandfathers, before the cheap abundance of the swift-moving heroes of five-cent literature, *The Vicar of Wakefield* was devoured by eager boys in the proper spirit. Unfortunately, Jack missed all but the length of it. He counted pages assiduously, and so crept slowly through the eighth chapter. It was killing work. At times he was so discouraged that he would search the bookshelves for something else of the estimable Goldsmith, something shorter; but always he turned aside from attacking dramatic

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

form, while essay was quite out of the question. How he got to the end of the *Vicar* with so little skipping in time to get the coveted A for extra reading is one of the mysteries of his high-school career, and one of the "stunts" he boasted of all his life.

It would have gone ill with Jack were it not for two things: first, no matter how little he was getting from the *Vicar*, it was more than any English he had done up till now, and, therefore, an improvement; and second, he was called on during a class symposium on the life of Goldsmith, and to his lot fell the question of what Goldsmith had written other than the poem read in class. None so well fitted to reply as he! Thus was English rescued *in extremis*.

The fatal first of February, or Mark Day, came at last, and Jack left Edie at the accustomed corner with the insincere declaration that he'd be mighty surprised if he hadn't flunked in at least two out of the seven subjects. Edie smiled wisely with the air of one not easily frightened.

Half an hour later Jack was staring at his report-card with dropping jaw. At first glance he had perceived that one of the two predicted failures was recorded among the luxuriance of C's, and the one poor straggling

THE GREEN C

B—in art. But it took several examinations, it took calculation with a ruler, it took the teacher's irate, "No mistakes have been made by your instructors on your report-cards. Look a little nearer home, if they don't satisfy you!" and even then Jack could not believe what his eyes beheld.

In his mad scramble for marks he had been faithless to his beloved. *He had flunked in chem!*

He found the desk of Peyton, the chemistry teacher, besieged with such as he himself, and the room full of boys with books, report-cards, and indignant, sheepish, sulky, or astonished faces. He remembered that he did not have his private chem-book with him, so the brilliant idea came to him that he would go with it and interview Peyton in the evening, away from school matters, where he could talk to him as man to man. He would then tell him that he had elected chemistry as his life-work, and let him see how serious a matter this failure would be to him on that account.

In the pale-blue twilight of five o'clock Jack descended upon the house of Peyton, a trembling and uncertain Jack, who had some difficulty in steering his feet and bringing them to a standstill on the awe-inspiring door-mat. The maid, a neat person with wary

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

eyes, permitted Jack to wait in the hall while she took his name up-stairs.

"Downing—er just say—er—one of his—er—his boys—students—in school—er—high school, you know," Jack had stammered, in agony, when she had demanded this necessary information.

Mr. Peyton followed her down the stairs. He looked entirely different from the man behind the desk at school—younger, slighter, and disconcertingly sociable. Jack became conscious of his manners.

"Downing," smiled Peyton. "Oh, you're the chap with that handsome note-book." He had caught sight of it in the crook of Jack's arm. "I suppose you're after more new stuff to put in it. Well, I've got a lot of books that will interest you up-stairs."

"Yes, sir." Jack's words felt hot and thick in his mouth. He followed the young man, clumsily tripping over the bottom step and knocking against the bannister with his heavy boots. Peyton led the way chatting blithely.

"I should like to show you the books I have home," he said. "I have a little laboratory there, too. Do you think of specializing in chemistry?"

"Ye—yes, sir. I like chemistry."

Peyton opened the door of his room, a cozy

THE GREEN C

place, glowing in the lamplight, full of a pleasing, scholar-like disorder, a faint odor of cigarettes and shoe-leather in the air.

"Sit down," said Peyton, hospitably. "Now let's have a good look at that note-book. I used to keep one myself—a bully thing to have, especially for reference when you quit school. But it's apt to cut into your regular work too much for me to approve of it as highly as I should like to be able to."

"Mr. Peyton"—Jack cleared his throat—"I—"

"Why, how is this?" exclaimed Peyton, deep in the note-book. "Didn't I see all this last time? Where's your glass manufacturing? You can get the best sort of diagrams and notes on that. And you haven't finished this Welsbach light. We've taken up matches, too, haven't we? My dear boy, you haven't begun to put in the stuff we've been covering lately."

He rose and went to the book-case in search of a book. Jack's courage almost returned while the other's face was concealed.

"Mr. Peyton—" he hesitated.

"Now," said Peyton, genially, "look here; for pleasant, light chemistry get this book from the library." He brought it to the table, and Jack could not help eyeing it with interest

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

as Peyton fluttered the leaves fascinatingly, and showed glimpses of just such diagrams and pictures as were the joy of Jack's heart. At an elaborate exposition of lithography and color-printing Jack forgot all about the object of his visit.

Suddenly Jack heard a little bell strike in a queer clipped way four times.

"What was that?" he asked, startled.

"My clock," answered Peyton.

"It struck four," declared Jack, incredulously.

"That's six o'clock; it's a ship's clock," replied Peyton.

Jack jumped up quickly.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed "I didn't mean to stay so long."

"Don't worry on my account—I enjoyed it," said Peyton. "I hope you'll come again."

He smiled genially, but Jack did not see it; for suddenly he remembered what had brought him there, and it seemed as impossible as it was necessary to mention it now.

"I—I came—to—" He swallowed what seemed to him to be his heart, that had got lodged in his throat. "I—I'm—I flunked in chemistry," he blurted out.

"So you did! How on earth did that hap-

THE GREEN C

pen?" Peyton looked as astonished and sympathetic as one of the boys.

"I don't know. Yes, I do. I had to quit studying chem, because I had a lot of other work to make up. I thought I was safe in chem," he added, reproachfully.

"It's a bad idea to quit studying anything," said Peyton, placidly. "Well, you'll pass off your condition with honors in June, though. And it will be some incentive for you to study it even though it isn't on your programme next term. We're so apt to drop things we don't have to do, and it would be a pity for you to give up chemistry when you like it so much."

Jack stared.

"You couldn't— You know I know more about it than lots of the boys that did pass and—" He felt Peyton's eyes on him in a curious, steady look, so he came to a full stop and averted his head.

"What are you studying for?" asked Peyton's friendly voice. "Marks?" Jack was silent. "Because if you are," went on Peyton, dryly, but without rancor, "I never should have guessed it—from results. No, no," he added, gently, "you needn't be ashamed of your C's if they're all honest."

"You don't think—" blazed Jack.

"Oh, I know you wouldn't think of cheat-

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

ing. That's only one way. But is it strictly on the level to do only the thing you want to do till you have to drop it entirely in order to scramble through the work you ought to be doing all term? There's a lot of talk about the efficacy of the present school curriculum. Of course, it leaves much to be desired, but how are we to know just where it lacks if you ignore it altogether? Why, you don't give us a fair show."

"I made up the work I lost," mumbled Jack.

"All of it?"

"Well—" Suddenly he thought of the maps, of the problems, of the verb-book, the *Vicar*. He rubbed his ear, and his sulkiness melted into a sheepish grin. "Gosh! It does seem funny I should flunk in the only subject I know anything about!"

Edie, returning at half past four and finding that Jack had just left the house, having said nothing of how he had fared at school to the forgetful elders, endured two hours of exquisite torture seeing Jack despondently throwing himself in the lake, running away to a life of vagabondage, or, insane with remorse, wandering witless through the town. It was she who opened the door when he rang the

THE GREEN C

bell, and she beheld his radiant face with a shock of anger.

"Jackie!" she exclaimed. "What happened? How did you do?"

"Awful," answered Jack, cheerfully.

"You flunked them all!" cried Edie.

"No, only chem."

"Chemistry!" Edie could not believe that she had heard aright, but Jack showed her the indisputable evidence of his report-card. "Oh, Jackie, with your note-book! Why don't you show it to him? He may change it for you; why, you ought to get two or three extra A's for all those beautiful drawings—"

"I did show it to him."

"You did! And didn't he—"

"Nope, and I didn't ask for it. I don't want it. I'm sorry now I got them for all those other things. And I'm never going to try for good marks again."

"Jackie!" Edie almost shrieked at his heresy.

"They're disgusting." Jack warmed up to his subject. "They ought to be abolished."

"You're talking like a little baby now." Edie calmed herself and spoke loftily. "How would we know how we were doing at school if we didn't have marks?"

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR

"We might have to *think* about it a little," suggested Jack, smoothly.

Edie wanted to cry in her discouragement. She felt that Jack was a lost sheep, but she could not find herself to blame in any way.

XII

THE NEW GAME

ABOUT this time an enthusiastic relative sent Jack a book which was to have its own special influence upon his career—a slim, yellow-bound book with a stirring picture on the cover, containing information on the subject that was firing the imagination of the youth of two great nations.

Jack was inspired to become a Boy Scout.

The study of this book promised to interfere with the even tenor of Jack's existence. The new-born zest for his lessons with which he had begun the second term began to droop and wane. Chemistry itself faded in the more alluring light of scouting. Even the call of the green C became a little smothered and less persistent. Camp life and its promise of regenerating the world gripped him. He determined that spring should see him return to nature with the holy ecstasy that had been quenched too long.

He showed the book to Miskell one after-

THE NEW GAME

noon, and they talked it over together. Miskell was not so easily inflamed.

"We've got to get organized," said he, seeing the obstacles first. "And for that we need a scout master. Do you know of any around here?"

Jack was obliged to admit he did not.

"We could write and find out for sure," he added, with hope.

"Letters are a sort of nuisance," said Miskell, doubtfully.

"Well, we could learn the laws and everything now and get into practice, and write when the spring comes. We'll be all the more ready then, and we won't have to be tenderfeet for any length of time."

Miskell tried to look as if he liked this plan. Personally he felt he had enough laws to obey and things to learn for his high school without burdening himself further. Jack was busy turning over the leaves of the book, and stopped at his favorite passages.

"The Morse code, for example," he said, eagerly. "That's something everybody ought to know. Just suppose you got locked in a safe. You could hammer on it and say 'Let me out,' and even give the combination so's it could be opened for you."

"You mightn't know the combination,"

THE GREEN C

said the pessimistic Miskell, passing over the possibility of his ever being struck with a mad impulse to get into a safe and thus put himself wilfully in the way of peril. "Besides"—he thought of something still more discouraging—"what good would it do unless the feller on the outside knew the Morse code, too?"

"That's just it!" Jack snapped up this point in the argument like a puppy pouncing on a biscuit. "Doesn't that prove what I say? It's everybody's duty to know it."

For a moment the conference threatened to degenerate into a debate on the advisability of teaching the code in the public schools. The whole nation seemed in imminent danger of becoming shut up in safes with no possibility of rescue. Miskell concluded it would be a good plan, after all, to arm himself against frightful emergencies by mastering it. They determined to work it up together, and, having settled this, they returned to the subject in hand.

"You see, that shows you how fine this Boy Scout business is," said Jack. "And that's only one of the things you have to learn. Look, here's a page of knots!"

He exhibited a plate that made Miskell dizzy to contemplate.

THE NEW GAME

"That's worse than algebra," he declared. Jack was hunting about for string.

"Let's see how many we can do," he proposed, with ardent enthusiasm. "You have to be able to tie four before you can be even a tenderfoot, you know. And you have to be able to make 'em in the dark."

"Why do you suppose they make you learn to tie knots?" asked Miskell, watching Jack struggle with an open book balanced on his knees, trying to twist the flimsy red string into some semblance of the most complicated knot on the page.

"Suppose you had to escape from a window; would you know how to knot the bed-sheets safely after you had torn them into strips?"

"It mightn't be the bedroom," answered Miskell, evasively.

"You're dodging, because you know you wouldn't," said Jack, not without good reason. "There are lots of cases where a knot, badly tied, might cost a man his life."

"What, for instance?" Miskell became interested.

"Oh, bunches of cases." For the life of him Jack could recall none just now save the extraordinary dilemma he had cited to begin with. He had given up the string, and

THE GREEN C

was looking through the book again. "I suppose you can't think of a case where you'd have to find your latitude, either?"

Miskell could not, and Jack read aloud the directions in the book, and so stumbled on the sentence in which the author agreed with Miskell. This only quenched Jack for a few seconds, however.

"Well, nothing could be more important than the laws," he said, taking his stand on the redoubtable ground of ethics. Honor, duty, loyalty, these crashing virtues broke Miskell's weak resistance, and he was whirled, protesting, into the fascinating game.

They held to their decision to practise the essentials, like the Morse code, the making of knots, and the observance of the laws, and did not yet take any direct step toward joining formally. They felt the summer was time enough for that, when lessons would be less pressing and camping would be more of a possibility.

The Morse code came hard. Somehow, though youths delight in secret alphabets, that of the inventor of telegraphy seems to lack human appeal. Jack stuck at it with a perseverance that would have amazed his instructors. Miskell broke down when the telegraph-operator at the station laughed at

THE NEW GAME

many of his letters, and wrote down what he declared was the original and authentic alphabet taught by Mr. Morse himself. The discouraging differences drove Jack to the Myer wig-wagging system; but here Miskell, always less ardent upon these matters, openly struck.

"No," he said, "I've put in enough time on it. I've flunked twice in Latin this week, and something tells me it is time to swear off. Maybe in the summer," he added, at the sight of Jack's disappointment. "When we can go out into the open somewhere, and really can use little flags to signal with, we'd be more interested and learn it easier."

Some of the laws, too, caused them slight uneasiness.

"A scout," says the yellow book, "smiles and looks pleasant under all circumstances." Under particularly trying difficulties, it recommends that "you should force yourself to smile at once, and then whistle a tune, and you will be all right."

Miskell, who was unable to whistle under any circumstances whatever, felt that here he might at last withdraw as one unqualified. But Jack, after some thought, came to the conclusion that humming a tune would do just as well, for the present anyway. When they

THE GREEN C

were ready to be enrolled officially, they would inquire into the matter further. He admonished Miskell to try to acquire this accomplishment, in case it should turn out to be one of the important requisites when they sent in their applications.

Lastly, they discovered the thriftiness of a scout is a hard matter to live up to. Jack had reason to believe that it would be necessary to join the organization on pay-day in order to have the looked-for quarter in the savings-bank to hand.

After a while it came to Jack that, as there was no scout master in the vicinity, and no other volunteers, it might be difficult to form a patrol. When he told this to Miskell the latter showed a surprising alacrity in accepting it as a final doom to the whole movement.

"We should have thought of that before," he said. "We've wasted a lot of time by not being bright enough to reason that out. The best thing we can do is to quit fooling about it, till they open a branch here."

"But how are they going to know we want one?" queried Jack.

Miskell shrugged his shoulders. He was quite the last person to ask this question.

The remedy came to Jack in the middle of

THE NEW GAME

the night, and set him broad awake, beaming in the dark. Converts!

There were Salle and Cameron and Jennings, and any number to choose from. He was not at all sure of Cartwright. In fact, he had a healthy dread of Cartwright's contempt in the matter. But once he had a little band—say eight—semi-trained, it would be only proper and natural that they should elect him patrol leader. Miskell could be corporal. Miskell was not taking the movement seriously enough, and perhaps the election to an office of trust and distinction might change him in this respect. Jack lay still and glowed all over at the thought of what this meant. He knew his rules well. A patrol leader has charge for a year, a glorious year of captaining a gang, training them and teaching them all the invaluable knowledge his beloved yellow book had taught to him. He planned turning his room into a club-room, if he could get his mother to consent. He thought out the summer camp. He decided what honors the members of his patrol would win. He tasted the parental joy of having his men gain glory under his guidance and inspiration. Personally he looked forward to getting his points by means of a camera. The chemical part of photography was so alluring. He would

THE GREEN C

save up for a decent-sized kodak with a good lens. He had always wanted one, and now that there was particular use for it, his desire became almost a passion. He fell asleep and dreamed that he was leading a heroic little band of Boy Scouts to their death, while Cartwright looked on and hooted.

The next day he told Miskell of this splendid plan to enlarge their corps, and Miskell took to it with the air of one who sees his last hope of escape gone forever. His attitude would have dampened the ardor of any one but Jack.

"How can we ask 'em to join the Boy Scouts, when we're not Boy Scouts ourselves yet?" he inquired, chillingly.

"We needn't put it that way," Jack replied. "It's just a sort of club for boys who want to become scouts. All we need to do is to get them interested."

"How?"

"First by just talking it over. Ask 'em if they know the Morse code—or—or"—the look in Miskell's eye warned him away from this particular topic—"or anything. You could start out by tying knots."

"In what?"

"Oh, I don't know! Say, Misk, don't you want to do it at all?" Contrary to certain

THE NEW GAME

rules, Jack began to feel wrath smoldering within him.

"Sure, I want to. Or I would if I knew what I was doing," replied Miskell. "I'm only asking how you begin. Just show me on some one."

"All right. How about Cameron? I'll have him with us in two days. You just watch."

Such is the power of enthusiasm that he was able to make good his promise. Cameron succumbed easily, first to Jack's diplomatic talk of books, leading through books on sport to camp life and the thoughts of distant summer, so gradually to Boy Scouts and the fun they have.

"If we only had the proper number of fellers who were willing to join, we might get up a patrol and apply for the right to organize. It would be great," said Jack.

"How many must there be in a patrol?" asked Cameron.

Jack told him, and they commenced figuring together which of the other members of the class they would care to have as associates.

It went so easily that Miskell's spirit of competition was aroused. He decided on Salle for his victim, the lazy-eyed, gentle-voiced Louisiana boy to whom outdoor

THE GREEN C

sports and exercises had little or no appeal. Miskell proceeded on Jack's plan, having thorough confidence in its effects. He spoke of books, with the result that Salle would speak of nothing else. Every time Miskell tried to make a connection with the subject of camping and athletics Salle would turn back the conversation as one turns back the hands on a clock. For example, Salle would be waxing enthusiastic over Edgar Allan Poe.

"Yes, but books ought to be read by the light of a camp-fire," Miskell would say, without the proper conviction.

"Did you ever try to read by firelight?" demanded Salle. "You'd be blind in a week if you weren't roasted straight through. But, say! Try reading *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* at night in your own room when every one else is asleep in bed—that will make your skin creep!"

"Great," said Miskell, limply.

"Or *The Masque of the Red Death*, or *The Tell-tale Heart*. Haven't you read any of Poe's at all?" So he would drag Miskell through the sloughs of literary ignorance, and they would be no nearer the real issue than when they started out.

He reported his failure to Jack, who shook his head at him pityingly.

THE NEW GAME

"You poor boob," he exclaimed, "to begin on Salle with books!"

Miskell smiled at him sunnily, and Jack glanced over his shoulder to see whom he was greeting thus, but there was no one there.

"What would you begin on if you were tackling Salle?" inquired Miskell.

"I? I'd use a little common sense, and not start a feller off on the one subject he's absolutely nutty over," answered Jack, again glancing over his shoulder at the galvanic reinforcement of Miskell's grin.

"You haven't said yet what is your idea of a sensible subject." Miskell's cheerfully contorted face, together with the impatience in his voice, began to get on Jack's nerves.

"I can't say, just offhand," he said, irritably, "but I'll bet I could get Salle easy in no time. What in thunder are you grinning at, anyway?" he exploded, unable to stand Miskell's impertinent look any longer.

Miskell merely started to hum absently, as though he were quite at ease with his conscience and prayed others might be the same. It was a harmless enough procedure, but it had a most insulting effect. It ended when the exasperated Jack grasped him forcibly by the arm with one hand and planted the other firmly and without gentleness over his mouth.

THE GREEN C

They broke loose and fell to. When they parted for breath Miskell's lip was bleeding and Jack's knuckles were broken and sore.

"What in blazes did you shove your dirty hand down my throat for?" demanded Miskell, between gasps.

"To shut you up, you confounded music-box. What do you think I did it for? To feel what kind of teeth you have?" panted Jack, wrathfully.

"You've got a nerve!" cried Miskell, bitterly. "First you tell me to do something, and when I do it you go and push my face in. You know very well I can't whistle. What do you suppose I found to sing or grin at, with you ragging the life out of me? It was only because I promised I'd try it. Well, you don't catch me trying it again. Look at there." He held out his blood-stained handkerchief to the remorseful Jack.

"Oh, say, Misk," he said, shamefacedly, "I'm mighty sorry. Honest! I didn't realize. I kind of thought you were mocking me or something. Really. I beg your pardon." He said the difficult words bravely. He was not to be outdone in chivalry by his own prospective corporal.

"That's all right"—Miskell uncomfortably

THE NEW GAME

took the battered hand extended to him—"only I was sort of—surprised."

When Jack made good his boast and won Salle over, Miskell agreed that not only was there something in the whole movement, but Jack was a born leader among men. Jack modestly attributed his conquests to the virtue of the game, but inwardly he felt there was much in what Miskell said. Meantime Cameron had persuaded his seat-mate, a boy named Klein, to join, and it needed but one other to make a full patrol. Miskell was in favor of Jack's trying for Cartwright's support. After the Salle affair Jack seemed to him irresistible; but Jack himself realized that he had certain limitations. Cartwright would be valuable because he was a power in the class on account of his knowledge of high-school technic, gathered from the elder brother he talked of so frequently. But Jack felt that should Cartwright join he might have to dispute his leadership.

"But don't you see," said Miskell, who was always a little afraid of Cartwright's irony, "he can do such a lot of mischief making fun of us, and perhaps turning the other boys against us that way."

"All right," Jack agreed, at last. "But we've got to get a good start of him first, or

THE GREEN C

he'll be trying to run things. We want to have a lot to teach him to keep him in his place."

One morning Jack realized that the time to speak to Cartwright was at hand. The end of February had been singularly mild, with a number of springy days that hinted at the approach of the camping season. The boys had profited by his teaching, and were in a fair state of organization, far enough ahead of Cartwright to make him understand that he was a beginner in their midst.

Miskell stood by to watch Jack's marvelous powers of persuasion take their course. Jack was a little nervous.

"Say, Cartwright," he began, "a lot of us fellers think of going camping this summer for a couple of weeks, and we think it would be kind of nice to start a club for it now." He launched into the attractive details, growing warmer and more convincing when he saw Cartwright was listening with interest. "Now," concluded Jack, "there are five of us so far—Miskell, Cameron, Salle, Klein, and myself. We'd like you to join if you'd care about it."

"Well"—Cartwright put his books into his desk, slowly and systematically; Miskell quivered with curiosity—"I think that's a

THE NEW GAME

pretty fascinating sort of stunt, and I'd like very much to join, only I haven't really got the time."

"You've got just as much time as we have," answered Jack.

"Yes and no," said Cartwright. "You see, it's this way. I'm going out for baseball this spring. I might be called on to substitute. That's the way my brother made his letter in his freshman year."

Miskell saw Jack start and stare. A sense of hopelessness filled him at the thought of hours and energy wasted upon matters that must come to naught. For as he watched he saw, clearly as though Jack's thoughts were written out for him in fire, the patrol leader was vanishing, and in his place there was returning the ambitious student aiming for his C.

XIII

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

"**S**AY, Downing," said Miskell, about a week later, seating himself on the turf beside Jack in the field, where they had been practising ball, "what's happened to Bub Stanton?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Jack, startled. "Is there anything the matter with him?"

"No, nothing like that. Only, I was thinking, you don't see him any more." Miskell was tossing the ball from hand to hand, as if he had a great deal more to say.

"Yes, I do," answered Jack, vaguely.

"Not as much as you used to," argued Miskell.

"No, not quite. But he's sort of busy now, and I've been busy, too."

"Well, listen; do you know what I was thinking?" Miskell spoke haltingly.

"What?"

"You've put in a lot of time on the Boy

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

Scout business, an' so have I, an' I hate to give it all up so easy. Now, if we could sort of—well, if we could—you see—Bub Stanton means a whole lot to the school here, and if—”

“You mean we ought to try to get Bub to join us?”

“Yes. *You* could.” Miskell's confidence in Jack for the first time awed and amazed even Jack himself.

“No, Misk,” he said, after a pause; “we haven't exactly got time for that sort of thing just now—with baseball coming on like this.”

“Is he on the team?”

“He sure is. He played first base last year.”

“I didn't know that. Then I guess you're right. It's no go.”

The two boys sat in silence for some time, gazing pensively at the ground. It had been difficult for Jack to rouse in Miskell the proper flame of enthusiasm, but once it had come into being it was not easy to quench. Miskell had put himself out to learn a number of new things, and he hated to feel that his energy had been consumed for nothing. His suggestion to elect Bub Stanton as a member of the patrol was the result of deep thought on his part. It had seemed to him an idea worthy

THE GREEN C

of the strategic Jack, himself, since it would establish the little club for good, even in the face of Cartwright's indifference. And it must be confessed that Miskell longed for some sort of victory with which to call down the supercilious Cartwright. Jack's too ardent teaching had caused him to set Boy Scouting above even baseball, and it was disturbing now to have to change his mind on the subject. Of course, Bub, being on the team, would have the more popular point of view. A new train of thought awakened suddenly.

"Say, Down," he exclaimed, "it might help you some, having him on the team like that, mightn't it?"

"I never thought of that!" Jack stared at him, bright-eyed. "I dare say it will help—some."

"It sounds pretty good to me," grinned Miskell. "Is Graham on the team, too?"

"Yes, so's Tin Pan Cauldwell. He'll be captain, I hear"—Jack spoke half attentively, then rose with a quick movement and faced Miskell—"but see here, Misk, I don't want to get on by pull."

"I guess you couldn't even if you wanted to," returned Miskell. "They're too straight. I only thought maybe they could give you

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

tips on how to play, and it doesn't hurt to have them your friends, anyway. I don't think it's fair to drop them the way you have."

"Don't worry. I haven't dropped them, and they won't drop me either. Now stand here a while, old sock, and let me sting 'em in to you from that tree over there, will you? Fast ones—it's getting sort of chilly."

Jack thought over Miskell's words as he stood pitching from under the tree, and he thought of them again that night. Miskell was right, unpleasant as it seemed. He was drifting away from Bub Stanton, and the rest of his senior friends, in his absorption over Boy Scouts and marks and other freshman matters. He determined to correct this. It was natural that his repentant mind should call up chemistry among the other matters he had been neglecting of late—chemistry, the subject which had had its hand in bringing about his comradeship with the fascinating Bub. He recalled the details of their first talk together that famous November day on their tramp in search of chestnuts. They had spoken of Professor Marshfield. A blinding inspiration came to Jack as he remembered how Professor Marshfield had once invited him to come and help himself to apples. He

THE GREEN C

decided to write to the professor begging to be allowed, not to rifle his orchards, but to look through his famous laboratory with a friend, who desired to share the honor of such a visit.

He could not wait till morning to set down the letter his imagination framed so completely and elegantly, lying there in bed. He arose, lit the gas, and drew up the first of the six drafts he was to make before the elaborate epistle read to his thorough satisfaction. He posted it late the following afternoon.

A few days after the professor's courteous though somewhat wordy answer came, leaving Jack still in doubt whether he would be pleased to have them come or preferred not to be bothered. When Jack mastered the writing, he made out that the professor was declaring himself "a recluse, rather unsifted in such perilous circumstance, and, therefore, with doubts concerning the genuine profundity of youthful philosophy, but prejudiced under the present circumstances by Jack's unusually mature request." Out of this wild medley of sounds Jack pounced on "prejudiced," and it was not to him a cordial-sounding word. His father, however, translated the letter for him, and Jack delightedly

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

waited for a chance to pass on his invitation to Bub. It came a short time later, after school.

"Say, Bub," he began, casually, feeling for the first time how far apart they had drifted by the fact that it was difficult to address him in this offhand manner, especially when there was another senior whom he did not know standing by. "Would this interest you at all?" He handed him the professor's letter.

"Great snakes!" Stanton was genuinely amazed at the handwriting. "Is it hieroglyphics?"

"No; I don't mean the writing. I mean what it says," explained Jack. "You've got to sort of half shut your eyes and read fast or you'll never get it," he added.

"Maybe it would help to put it in a zoetrope," proposed Bub's companion.

"Wait!" cried Bub, triumphantly. "I've found something—'My dear—' Is this you?"

"Yes," answered Jack. "Maybe I'd better read it for you. I've had practice."

In the midst of a very complicated sentence which, if the truth were told, Jack did not read with special intelligence, the seniors stopped him with a howl.

"Browning!" yelled Bub. "I recognize the

THE GREEN C

style of *Sordello*. A Browning manuscript, or I'm a sinner!"

"Browning?" repeated Jack, bewildered.

"Yes; Robert, the poet—he writes like that."

"It isn't poetry." Jack looked a little distressed. "It's just a letter from Professor Marshfield—"

"Marshfield!" Bub Stanton seized it. "Well, I'm dashed. Marshfield?—the old duck with the laboratory—*our* Marshfield?"

"Yes." Jack was encouraged by his excited manner.

"Are you sure?" Stanton was trying to make out the signature in which the professor had concentrated all his efforts to disguise the English alphabet.

"Yes," replied Jack, "it's an answer to one I wrote him."

"Then it's really addressed to you?" Jack nodded. "What does he say?"

Jack reached out his hand for it.

"I'll read it—"

"No! You tried that before. Just tell us. You've got us worked up about it now."

Jack told them, and Bub Stanton chortled in his glee.

"Oh, you Jackie!" he cried. "You're a gem, you're a jewel, you're a lamb! You bet

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

I'll go with you. I've been waiting to get my nose into his old diggings ever since he built them there—before I was born. Oh! whee! They say he has a monoplane out there, half done, and that he's got a new scheme for running it with a composition of radium. And they say he can transmute metals, and, oh, they've got a bunch of fairy tales about him. It's one of the best private laboratories in the world. Did you ever see radium, Hoxley?"

"No."

"Well, we're going to. Say, I didn't know you were as intimate as that with him. You just told me you'd been out there once." Bub turned to Jack. "Were you in the laboratory at all?"

"Oh no; that was before I knew anything about chemistry," said Jack. "I'd have walked through like a dub."

"How'd you have the nerve to write to him?"

So the whole beautiful story was rehearsed. They made a date to ride out on their wheels on the coming Saturday, if the weather remained mild. Hoxley, the other senior, openly envied them, and Jack's importance swelled.

"All right, I'll let him know, then, Bub," said Jack, in good-by, having no trouble to

THE GREEN C

be friendly and familiar now. "So long till then."

On Saturday Jack called at Stanton's house, dressed appropriately to the occasion and accompanied by his wheel. The day was fine, and the roads were in excellent condition, moistened by a fall of rain on the previous day, not wet enough to be muddy except in the ditches.

Stanton appeared, looking equally natty and business-like, with his white sweater newly cleaned so that the green C seemed to shine out on its snowy ground. In fact, their appearance awed one another at first, and they rode along side by side rather silently for a while, except for occasional polite observations as to the road or the weather. In this way they left the town behind them and struck into the Marshfield run, where every tree and bush, bare now, recalled to Jack that ride with Mr. Carrington. Before he knew it he was describing him to Bub, and giving samples of his theories. That, Jack said, was what induced him to leave the ball in the laboratory.

"It does look like fate," continued Jack, pensively. "Everything of importance that I've done lately seems to lead to chemistry. I feel that to-day I shall know just how much it's going to mean in my life."

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

"Hello!" exclaimed Stanton, suddenly.
"What's that?"

They heard the sound of shouting in the distance, and the heartrending yelp of a hurt dog. As they turned a tree-sheltered curve they saw, a short way off, a tall man suddenly release a dog he was maltreating and turn upon a smaller man who rushed in to meet the attack. Both boys quickened their speed with an instinct to interfere in so unequal a match. The larger man seemed to shower blow after blow on the smaller without any effect. The other defended himself valiantly, but could do nothing in the way of attack, and it would be only a matter of seconds before he would weaken under the treatment he was receiving. The subject of the dispute, a bony, ragged cur, crawled to a near-by stone, where he shivered and cowered, furtively licking at the blood the cruel welts of his assailant's stick had brought forth. Bub and Jack came up just in time to see the larger man suddenly seize the other's wrist and force him to the ground, then raise his fist for a final blow upon the unprotected head.

Stanton was not so tall as the man who was getting the worst of it, and Jack was even smaller; but they wasted no time over this

THE GREEN C

thought, putting their whole faith in numbers. They swung clear of their wheels and closed in. "You go at him from the front; I'll grab his arms," Stanton panted to Jack. "Make for his stomach and wind him, if you can."

The heavy hand had descended, and was raised again. They saw the man on the ground, though apparently giddy with the loss of blood, still held his nerve, and was now trying to throw the other by twining his arms about his legs. Jack set his teeth and ran in, tripping over the fallen body. He landed squarely upon the tyrant's abdomen at the same time Bub seized him from the rear and pulled him backward. They all fell together in one writhing heap, and struggled thus three to one. At last Bub flung himself bodily across the huge chest of the common foe, and Jack and the third devoted themselves to his feet, and so they all rested, panting heavily.

"I can manage him now, Downing. Just see if you can't find a rope. There are old clothes-poles back of the shack there, somewhere." He whom they had rescued was speaking in a familiar voice, and they stared at him, astonished. It was Graham, impossible to recognize through all the blood and dirt.

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

"Well, I'll be blowed!" gasped Bub. "*You!*"

"Me," answered Graham, succinctly. "Go on, Down, quit your staring. We need that rope."

Jack left in a daze. Somehow his mind revolved about the figure of Graham in the gym, seemingly ages ago, wishing for the chance to prove himself. His heart leaped joyfully. He was glad they would be able to see a token of Graham's courage now.

He woke from his dreaming and looked around for the rope. He was on a little deserted farm consisting of a couple of vacant weather-beaten shanties with broken windows, and whose idle doors hung crookedly half open. Near by, as Graham had predicted, were bent and splintered poles, with mournful streamers of rain-blackened rope depending from them. Jack cut and knotted these, wondering why he had been unable to cite such an occasion as this to Miskell to prove how a badly made knot might result in death. He was a bit nervous about the sort of knot to make. Was it the time for the reef, the fisherman, or the binder? He tried all three.

"What kept you?" asked Bub, when he returned. "Couldn't you find any?"

"Yes, but it was all in bits," Jacked flushed. "I had to piece it."

THE GREEN C

When they tied up the victim, who, with the return of his breath, kept up a violent stream of profanity, Jack insisted upon inspecting all the knots, and passed them all, finding himself less expert than he had thought in detecting the wrong kind.

"Now listen, kid," said Graham; "take your wheel and go to the nearest house and ask if you can telephone for a policeman. Only be a heap sight quicker than you were about the rope, or we won't be able to hold him. Tell the people of the house what happened, and they'll be glad to let you."

"Remember we're here sitting on him till you get back," put in Stanton; "and not only is he making a beastly noise, but he's bumpy and uncomfortable. And say, maybe we'd better call off Professor Marshfield, too. We can't go in this state." He looked from his own muddy and dilapidated finery to Jack's. "Tell him what happened. We probably will have to go to the station-house with this chap."

"And hit it up!" warned Graham, again.

"You can trust me." Jack ran his wheel out into the road, and, mounting, sped off. The nearest house boasting a telephone was considerably over a mile away, and its inhabitants, upon whom Jack burst so uncere-

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

moniously, were interested beyond measure in the story he had to tell. Each member of the family had a recollection of a similar experience, and after he had 'phoned Jack thought he would never be able to get away. Finally two men and a boy belonging to the household declared their intention of accompanying Jack back, and this company swelled to a small army before they had gone very far. Jack in advance, politely riding his wheel at a walking pace, suddenly spied two familiar figures far ahead, one trundling a wheel, and the other holding something in his arms. There was no sign of a prisoner, however, and the two were plainly coming toward them up the road. Jack bent over his pedals, and, leaving his little band behind, soon came up to his friends.

"Say!" was Graham's alarmed exclamation, as he nodded down the road over the disreputable body of the trembling dog he carried. "We didn't send you ahead to get up a parade."

"I didn't do that. They just came," answered Jack. "I've sent for a constable, and he's coming when they can find him. But what did you do with him?"

"The real question," answered Bub, "is what he did with us."

THE GREEN C

"The ropes were rotten and busted," explained Graham.

"The knots! Did they come undone?" gasped Jack.

"Oh no; they held beautifully." Bub's eye twinkled. "You see, we were just sitting on him quietly, chinning easy and sociably above his cussing, when he just got up and shook us off of him and legged it."

"He got away?"

"Oh, we could spare him."

"What will they say?" Jack pointed to the advancing crowd. "Suppose they get an idea we've been stringing them? They'll lock us up!"

"Don't worry; we can take 'em and introduce 'em to the scene of the late struggle," said Bub, a little uneasily.

"We've got the dog to prove it," put in Graham. "Great Cæsar! When I think of it I wish we had given him a taste of his own medicine, when we had him bound there."

"Before he found he could get up by himself he tried to make us set him free by telling us we couldn't arrest him because it was his own dog, and he could do what he liked with it, and he was only exercising it when Graham butted in."

"Exercising!" Graham ground his teeth.

GRAHAM TAKES HIS CHANCE

"Look here, Jack, and here." Jack turned away sick at the sight. The poor dog whimpered feebly, and Graham's big arm went around it again. "Oh, we were fools not to have soaked him, Bub!"

Some of the vanguard of Jack's "parade" arrived here, and they were inclined to resentment when their long walk promised to end so tamely. But as Graham and Bub had predicted, the welts on the dog's back, and the scene of the scuffle, where there were footprints enough to feed their detective instincts for some time, soon satisfied them. The boys promised to appear against the tramp should he ever be caught, and so they were permitted to start for home.

They were very late getting back to town, trundling their wheels to accompany Graham, who further delayed them by adopting the dog and carrying him most of the way, or leading him very slowly and gently with a bit of rope.

"What 'll your mother say?" Bub had asked, eyeing this sorry creature dubiously.

"She won't mind. Just wait till his coat gets better and I get him cleaned up. You won't know him," was the quick reply.

"I hope I won't. He could stand the change," said Bub, feelingly. "He sure is a

THE GREEN C

queer-looking object to risk your life for. Great Scott, Walt!" he burst out, suddenly, staring at the grimy and battered figure beside him. "You *are* a fool! What would have happened if we hadn't come up just then? What made you start something with him, anyway? Couldn't you see how much bigger he was than you?"

"I was too busy," answered Graham, in a low voice, "thinking how much bigger I was than the dog."

XIV

EXPERIMENTS

DURING algebra hour on Monday, Jack suddenly straightened up in his seat, and brought his open hand down resonantly upon the desk, sending Miskell's ruler clattering to the floor in a shower of yellow working-papers. Mr. McNaughton, the mathematics instructor, turned quickly with a long stare of controlled anger and astonishment; the boys tittered openly.

"Who is responsible for that noise?" demanded Mr. McNaughton, in cold fury.

Jack rose, his cheeks scarlet. He had no explanation to offer. Miskell, frankly bewildered, was called on to account for what had occurred, but was only able to testify that up to the moment of that explosive gesture his seat-mate had been in perfect order, and had not exchanged a word with any of his neighbors within the past ten minutes. It was true. Jack had been dozing inoffensively through the long hour, as was his

THE GREEN C

wont, when he suddenly remembered that in his excitement over the tramp Saturday he had forgotten to telephone to Professor Marshfield, calling off the visit for that day.

He remedied this defect by devoting the rest of the algebra period to the construction of a letter of apology to the old gentleman, jotting down notes on his paper with his eyes fixed studiously on the blackboard in an attitude that convinced his instructor of his somewhat tardy resolution to reform.

Professor Marshfield, like most eccentric and sensitive men, was apt to be considerate when least expected. Jack's letter, a long and involved affair, may have had its share in softening him. Jack had tried to imitate the professor's florid sentences, and managed with fair success at the expense of clearness.

"My youthful companion, Walter Graham," he had concluded, rather handsomely, "retained custody of the maltreated canine, at which he was excessively pleased, being a vagrant beast without domicile or master of its own to maintain it."

When Jack read this part to Miskell, the latter professed to believe that the writer was being rude to Graham; but Jack took com-

EXPERIMENTS

fort in the thought that his friend was not well versed in the professor's literary style.

After some study of the answer this invoked, Jack learned that the professor had been "amused and edified by the characteristic incident so vividly portrayed," and that he was anxious to hear more about it "verbally, from the lips of the participants." Jack looked up the exact meaning of "participants" in two dictionaries, and concluded that this was a special invitation to Graham to join them. Graham felt otherwise, and said he was not interested enough in science to risk being kicked out for it.

The afternoon was set for the following Saturday, and it was something the boys never forgot. The little man welcomed them with a courtesy that put them on a par with the greatest chemists in the land. He took them through his wonderful laboratories, and answered all their questions simply, making his explanations easy to understand. He showed them a few experiments, instinctively choosing the sort that would appeal to them, such as had sufficient magic in them, yet could be explained without too deep a knowledge of technicalities. Photography in all its branches fascinated them, from the pin-hole camera and some remarkable effects he

THE GREEN C

had obtained from this simple, lensless instrument to the complicated marvels of color-photography.

"Ah, no," he protested, when they exclaimed in boyish admiration over the fine colored plates he showed them as the result of his work in this line, "I cannot claim to have done anything. I have originated nothing here. These come merely from following in the path Lummière has laid out. One should further the scope of this work, or let it alone. I have not the time to give to it. I leave it to others to perfect."

Both Jack and Bub understood this as a suggestion to try their skill in the art, and both resolved to take the hint some day.

The X-rays next held their attention, and thence they stepped into fields of electricity, from which there was no escape until it was so dark and late that riding home along the lonely road became somewhat of a thrilling adventure, a fit ending to so full a day.

This visit inspired in the two boys what may be regarded as a chemical renaissance. Their interest in the subject actually became a frenzy. Jack's pocket-money went now to the purchase of strange, malignant little bottles, for whose weird contents even he himself could find no actual use. He loved

EXPERIMENTS

their names, and spent his time cataloguing and labeling them, and often exhibited them to the awe-stricken Edith with interesting if disturbing facts concerning the number of people he could annihilate with the most innocent-looking among them. Of course, both boys had inventions to work on, the perfection of which would revolutionize the world. But as neither of their mothers was altruistic enough to dedicate a bath-room to the cause, the world seemed doomed to an indefinite delay. One lunch-hour, however, Bub came into Jack's class-room bursting with good tidings.

"Listen," he said, excitedly; "I've got a laboratory for us."

"A laboratory!"

"All fitted up with everything."

"You mean a place we really can use?"

"Yep."

Jack regarded him incredulously.

"A *real* laboratory?"

"The realest, after Professor Marshfield's, we've ever been in."

"Have I ever been in it?"

"Yep," Stanton grinned. "It's where you made your first hit in chemistry."

"My what?" Jack was completely mystified.

THE GREEN C

"You went in it to see that your ball was comfortable before you left it there for the night."

"The little lab!" gasped Jack. "You don't mean that!"

"I sure do."

"But—do you mean us to—sneak in?"

"Sneak nothing," returned Stanton, virtuously. "I got permission from Stapleton himself." He showed Jack a yellow slip of paper on which was written, "Admit Robert Stanton and friend to small laboratory, Friday, March 26th, till 4.30 P.M."

"Great Cæsar Augustus! How did you get it?" Jack was stupefied at this miracle.

"I showed him the letter of Marshfield's that I borrowed from you. That's what I wanted it for, but I didn't tell you till the scheme went through. He just gobbled it up. I'm his friend for life now. Of course, he wanted to know who Downing was. He didn't remember you. I guess you had Peyton as teacher, didn't you?"

Jack nodded hastily. "What did you say then?" he asked.

"I told him it was a friend of mine who was studying chemistry, and he must have thought you were pretty grown up to be able to understand a letter like that. Anyway,

EXPERIMENTS

he only said my friend was lucky to be so well acquainted with a man like Marshfield, and then he hands me out this permission as easy as anything."

"Gee!" Jack swelled at his own importance in the story. "It does make me feel kind of big. Do you suppose he thinks I'm really a man?"

"I didn't try to let him know you weren't. Of course, I never said you were, but—well, it doesn't seem likely he'd let me loose in there among all those chemicals with a freshie. They can't seem to realize that boys of your age can know as much as you do. We'll be extra careful, too, and put everything just as we found it when we're finished, and maybe they'll let us have it again."

Friday afternoon, then, Robert Stanton and friend entered the little laboratory with Mr. Stapleton's key. They gazed about them in keen delight and sniffed hungrily at the chemical-laden air. Jack tried to recall how he had felt the day Graham had helped him in through the window to look for the ball, when even a retort was unknown to him by name and the room seemed shrouded in hopeless mystery, the bottles, books, and jars merely bottles, books, and jars to his ignorant and unappreciative eyes.

THE GREEN C

"Say," gloated Stanton, removing his coat and rolling up his sleeves, "this is great! Do you know they almost set this afternoon for a meeting of the baseball club? I made 'em change it."

"It doesn't look much like baseball yet." Jack nodded to the window. March was promising to make good the old prophecy of ending as roughly as it had begun mild. The clouds hung heavy; the trees beyond the window tossed themselves spasmodically in the rough blasts of wind that assailed them now and then.

"Bad day for a fire," commented Bub. "Now, what do you want to try first?"

"Well, you know about the electrolysis of water, don't you?" Jack seated himself on the edge of a zinc-covered table. "Do you remember my scheme for using that for divers? I did work out a plan, but the blessed thing would weigh too much with all the batteries and tubes, so I started to dope out some way of doing without the electrical part. There ought to be some chemical that sets free oxygen in the water of its own accord. It sounds plausible, doesn't it? Now, if I only could find that chemical my fortune's made. I intend to look for it and experiment till I find it. I don't care if it takes me the rest of my natural lifetime."

EXPERIMENTS

"There's only one trouble about it," said Bub, solemnly; "but it completely ruins any chance you ever had of discovering it."

"What? Danger? I know my risks, but I'm not going to be scared off." Jack smiled contemptuously. "All scientists take a chance."

"No," answered Bub; "not danger."

"You mean no such stuff exists? Well, I'm here to prove it does."

"Not even that. Much worse than either. You see"—Stanton became very confidential—"it's been discovered by some one else long ago."

"It *has*, and they never made use of it!" Jack looked astonished.

"Oh, perhaps they have, but not in your way. You want to stick some in a little box and put it over a diver's nose, I suppose?"

"Not exactly." Jack flushed at this flip-pant reference to his invention. "There's a lot to it besides that, and the more I think it over the more practical it gets. Look, it's like this." Jack took a dilapidated note-book from his pocket and drew a rough sketch of what he intended to call a Tubeless Oxygenated Diver's Mask when he should apply for the patent.

"You ought to see how the stuff works,"

THE GREEN C

declared Stanton, who, in spite of himself, had been impressed. "I'll show you the experiment, if you like," he added, eagerly. "It might make you change parts of it, or it might suggest improvements."

"Good! I'd love to see it. Say, Bub, it's hard to believe the worst part is done! Why, any minute now I can complete the rest. I wonder where you get the models for these things made, or if you have to make them yourself."

"I think the best inventors don't trust their ideas to any one but themselves." Bub was looking along the shelves for the required bottle. "Say, just fill up a pan with water, will you?"

"Sure." Jack jumped down from his perch with alacrity, and did as he was bid, talking volubly all the while. "I don't think I could actually make one myself, but I could try. Do you have to be of age to get a patent?"

"I don't know. It's a sodium compound, I think. Did you wash out the pan?" Stanton was still busy with labels.

"No. I'd better, hey? Anything else? Flame's the test for oxygen, isn't it?" He took the precaution to light the Bunsen burner. "I could get my father to take out the patent for me till I was twenty-one, couldn't I?"

EXPERIMENTS

"Sure. This is it, I think." Bub reached up and took down a bottle. "Metallic sodium—I remember, now." He brought it over to the table. "There were two experiments," he said, knitting his brows thoughtfully. "I'm sorry I left my note-book home."

"Maybe it's in one of those." Jack pointed to the books on the shelf above them.

"Oh, it's perfectly harmless either way," declared Stanton. "Only it might produce hydrogen instead of oxygen—that's all."

"Don't you think you'd better—" Jack again nodded toward the shelf.

Bub looked at him sharply.

"Are you scared already?" he demanded, derisively. "Who was so willing to risk his life in the cause of science a moment ago and gets cold feet over a little hydrogen now? The only thing is I mustn't put in too much of this goo at a time."

Jack edged away and watched him empty three of the little gray pellets into a graduate.

"You see," began Bub, "you invert a test-tube filled with water in this pan. The action of the metallic sodium sets free the oxygen, which then rushes in and fills up the tube. I'll show you. Just fill up one of those test-tubes over there."

Jack did so. He liked Bub's air of assur-

THE GREEN C

ance that seemed to quell the chemicals and show them who was master, but he felt that he himself was still a little unprepared for unchaperoned laboratory work. He wished, as he held that inverted test-tube in the pan of water, that he knew enough about what he was doing to feel as safe as Bub seemed to feel.

Bub looked from the water to the graduate of salts, removed a speck from the edge of the glass, and tossed the compound lightly in the pan.

All Jack recalled of what followed immediately was that the water commenced to writhe and hiss as though it were filled with the most violent-tempered serpents. He felt himself jump back just in time to be out of reach of a tremendous cloud of yellowish flame that extinguished itself with a detonating "boom!" A moment later Bub shouted something at him indistinctly as a lake of fire spread itself over the top of the zinc table. With the ever-present thought that he must not on any account lose his head in this crisis, and the remembrance of Bub's remark that it was a bad day for a fire, Jack rushed out into the hall. He made straight for the alarm, and, seizing the scarlet hatchet from the rack, did what he often had longed to do, but with no feelings of delight.

EXPERIMENTS

The action of the metallic salts in the pan of water did not surprise Jack more than what happened now, on the breaking of the glass. He always had imagined this was a still alarm, connected with the fire-houses. Instead of which he stood staring with cold perspiration starting from every pore. From the noise, he was sure he had set loose all the bells in the world, and they must continue to ring forever.

The building, empty and dead a second before, sprang into life with the hurrying of many feet, those who had been detained, voluntarily or not, after the closing hour—clubs, fraternities, extra-session classes, the janitor, the librarian, the cleaning corps.

Some one grasped Jack's arm, and hurried him to the door. It was Bub Stanton.

"You chump! Oh, you boob! You crazy, raving, blithering nut! What in blazes did you think you were doing?" he was saying. "Come quick, before they catch us!"

"*I!*" shouted Jack, indignantly. "What did *I* do! Well, I *am* blessed!"

But he had no time for further protest or argument till they were a good distance from the school corner, watching the rush of men and boys and fire-engines that swept by in that direction, every one shrieking to every

THE GREEN C

one else, "Cleveland's on fire! Cleveland's on fire!"

"We'd better go back now with them or they'll suspect us," Bub was thinking aloud. "Come on!"

"I like your nerve!" panted Jack, as they trotted back. "You set the whole blame place on fire, and then yell at me for giving the alarm. I suppose you'd have escaped and let them all burn up rather than risk being caught!"

"Burn up, nothing!" retorted Bub. "It was no fire at all, just a bunch of alcohol that you upset when you jumped back. I smothered it in no time with my coat—and look, it's hardly scorched. But what in thunder possessed you to light that Bunsen burner?"

"To test the oxygen."

"That was the biggest fool stunt I ever heard of, next to setting off the alarm."

"Do you mean that there is really nothing the matter?" Jack's relief fought with his anger.

"You've stirred up the town with your infernal ringing. Somebody must have sent for the fire-engines. It's lucky you didn't do that, too. You can be fined or imprisoned for that. Look there."

A little troop of boys was trotting past in

EXPERIMENTS

noticeable good order, carrying ropes and hammers. Miskell was in the lead, and those who followed Jack recognized as his own incipient Boy Scouts out on their first heroic quest. He tried to hide behind Bub, but Miskell saw him and came running over.

"It's Cleveland," he gasped. "Gee! we thought you were in there. Come on, there are bunches of people to help."

"There's no fire," said Jack.

"Oh, isn't there just! Some one said there was a big explosion and then flames. It's fierce, they say. I was scared stiff that you—"

"I tell you there isn't any," denied Jack.

"How do you know?"

"Stanton put it out."

"But—where are you coming from, anyway?"

"I set off the school alarm, and we beat it. I didn't wait to see what happened. Something flamed up and—and—I lost my head."

"Then something *did* flame!" cried Salle, quickly. "Come ahead! We've got to see if we're wanted."

They ran on, but their prospective patrol leader followed without haste. It took a good deal of courage to join in the crowds that gathered around the building, and to be present when the fire company discovered

THE GREEN C

it had been a false alarm and declared themselves ready to start a thorough investigation on the spot.

"We'd better go to Doc Hall and explain, this very afternoon," said Stanton, when the excitement had subsided. "They can't really do anything to us, because we have the pass from Stapleton. But it's better to own up promptly and get it off our minds."

When Dr. Hall had heard the whole story and pronounced judgment, some of the charm of a chemist's life had disappeared. As Stanton had said, there was nothing they could be punished for so long as they were armed with Stapleton's permit, but the Doctor had a good deal to say concerning ignorance, carelessness, and panic. When he finished, Jack felt that, far from being fitted to the office of patrol leader, he was not even qualified to become a tenderfoot, or even to dream of the clear-headed business of scouting. After all, everything would have gone smoothly had he refrained from tampering with the alarm.

From that day a new order was put into force forbidding any boy to stay in the laboratories except under the eye of an instructor. Jack was a little comforted by the reflection that he had at least left a mark

EXPERIMENTS

on the constitution of the school, but what joy he got from this was banished when Bub Stanton took him aside seriously one day and advised him to give up all his hopes of becoming a chemist.

"Take any other science you can your last year, unless Stapey's dead," he warned. "He's laying it up for you. It's bad enough now with me, but you'll get yours with interest. We didn't know it, but he was in the building all along. And say"—Bub tried to suppress a giggle—"I found out to-day something that's making him sore enough to flunk me and keep me from graduating, if he can."

"What now?" Jack looked startled.

"He had to pay ten dollars fine."

"For letting us in there?"

"No!" Stanton did his best not to chuckle, and failed. "It—it was he—who—notified—the fire department!"

XV

THE WAY TO THE C

WITH the milder weather came the hint of the return of the great national game. The ambitions that rise up with the reawakening of the world every spring thrilled Jack, and set him to work with Miskell, so that this pair could be seen at all hours in road or field "stinging 'em in," as it is technically called, with the historic League ball. The second week in April had been set for the try-out, and Jack felt he had neglected these matters too long in his will-o'-the-wisp hunt after lesser glories. He realized that there was much striving to be done for his coveted C. Being a freshman, which meant that he was naturally young and comparatively small in stature, he was somewhat handicapped in his efforts to make the team while there were older and larger applicants in the field. Strength and brawn he had not, but skill he could acquire. He decided that he would gain attention by his dazzling good play.

THE WAY TO THE C

"I would be a pretty good pitcher if I could depend on myself more," he told Miskell in confidence one day. "Once in a while I get over a peach of a curve; but it's always a surprise to me when I do it. The whole trouble with me is that I lack control."

To gain the control so necessary he dedicated many hours both of his own and of Miskell's time. The latter worked with him without a murmur of protest, encouraging him in his times of depression, criticizing and advising always with the apologetic air of a disciple correcting his teacher.

One Tuesday morning, a week before the try-out, Dr. Hall announced in chapel that the new public baths had been opened to the town, with the stipulation that they should be given over to the sole use of the students of Cleveland High School every Tuesday and Friday afternoon from three o'clock till six. He followed up this information with a little lecture on the necessity of using the opportunities thus offered to learn how to swim. There was nothing, he said, so essential to every boy's education as the ability to preserve himself from drowning. He mentioned several occasions when this knowledge had saved him and many of his friends; he became so engrossed in the topic

THE GREEN C

that he talked long into the first period, and he spoke so well that half the boys left chapel in mortal terror that they were in imminent danger of finding watery graves.

The consequence was that the pool was so crowded that afternoon that no sort of swimming at all was possible. Jack had been one of those turned away, and he sulked most lamentably because of it.

“How do they expect any of us to be able to do anything if they fill up the tank with a bunch of little babies that yell when they feel the water touch them, and fool around shivering and pushing and splashing each other?” He put the question to Miskell, who had not been of the rout. Miskell had no answer to this; but Dr. Hall had. He put it in the form of another announcement the next day. He reserved Fridays for the boys who knew something about it and wished to form teams for swimming races and water-polo, or who wanted to go in for fancy diving. He was an enthusiast on aquatic pastimes, was the good Doctor, and could not find words in which to praise them enough.

Jack was in high feather. Here, at least, he felt he was able to make a showing against good men. He had swum over a mile, could

THE WAY TO THE C

dive fairly well, and was as much at home in deep water as if he were on land.

"You see," he explained to Miskell, "some fellers are cut out for some things. Now, I'm just the right sort of a build for swimming. You have to be kind of light, like me, and yet strong in your arms, and—er—well—er—er—graceful."

Miskell, who was as a stone in the water, did not hasten to agree with this statement.

"I don't know." He glanced down at his own figure. "I've seen lots of chaps that are mighty strong and graceful, and they can't swim a stroke."

"That's only because they haven't been taught, then. Dr. Hall says all animals know how to swim, and a man ought to be able to do it better than any of them."

"Better than fishes?"

Jack chose not to pay any attention to this frivolous interruption.

"He says it's only because men are so lazy about learning that they have any trouble at all. If you began when they were babies, and made 'em swim right from the start, they could beat anything—any land animal." He corrected himself swiftly.

"Ducks?" asked the irrepressible Miskell.

"It's because men are scared"—again Jack

THE GREEN C

overlooked the comment—"and they get beating around in the water and swallowing so much they sink instead of keeping their mouths shut and attending to business. You'd better hurry up and learn, Misk. There's no telling when you'll need to know how. Besides, it's one of the rules of the Boy Scouts."

"Sure I'll learn," acquiesced Miskell. "But it isn't only because you're lazy or scared that you don't find out how to. Supposing you never had the chance before. I think Doc Hall has his nerve with him if he says it is. How about the poor dopes that haven't any water around to practise in? You can't do much swimming in a bath-tub."

"That's not the point, anyway. What I wanted to say was that some of us may be built for football, like big Graham or Cow Martin, and some may be made for running, and some for—all sorts of things. But perhaps I'd have a better chance of getting my letter at swimming than I would at baseball."

"Are you going to give up practising?" Miskell gasped.

"No—not entirely. But I'd just as soon get on the team in my sophomore year."

"Jack Downing!" Miskell looked amazed and outraged. "After we went and bought that ball, and put in all this time on it—"

THE WAY TO THE C

"I'll tell you," broke in Jack, confidentially. "I really want to get ahead of Cartwright. Now the possibility is we'll have a lot more chances in the tank than we would at baseball. We'll be having lots of swimming meets before the ball season even gets started. And I'm anxious to get my C before he gets his."

"How do you know that he won't go in for swimming, too?" demanded Miskell.

"He's too interested in his baseball," replied Jack; "besides, I can see by the way he's built that he probably doesn't even know how to swim."

Miskell, during the six months of constant association with the versatile Jack, came to have unbounded as well as unfounded faith in him. Consequently, it was with a feeling of there having been a mistake made in nature, rather than by Jack, that he saw Cartwright enter the class-room two mornings later with a little dark-blue, unmistakable roll of Jersey strapped to his books.

"It's Friday," he exclaimed. "You won't be allowed in the pool to-day."

"Why not?" demanded Cartwright, beligerently.

"Because Friday is reserved only for those who know how to swim," replied Miskell, promptly.

THE GREEN C

“And who says I can’t?”

“Why—I—er,” Miskell grew scarlet under the other’s insulted glare. “You—you don’t look as though you were built for it.”

“Just who is built for it, for instance?” inquired Cartwright, sweetly.

“Downing,” answered Miskell, feeling that this was the answer Cartwright was expecting, and perhaps dreading.

“Downing is, is he?” Cartwright smiled. “I suppose he told you that. Well, just tell him for me that I’ll race with him any time he wants.”

When Jack came in Cartwright was at the other side of the room, and Miskell lost no time in delivering this challenge. His faith in Jack was strengthened by the look on that individual’s face as he gave his answer, with easy contempt.

“If he doesn’t back out, I’ll take him up this afternoon.”

“Oh, say, I wish I could sneak in and watch you,” said Miskell, longingly.

“Just hang around the door this afternoon. There may not be such a crowd to-day, since only the swimmers are let in. You might be able to get by, later on,” advised Jack, desiring a witness to his coming triumph.

Nevertheless, that afternoon, when he stood

THE WAY TO THE C

on the edge of the tank with four others awaiting the signal to "Go!" he did not feel quite so confident. The course was the length of the pool, touch and return, and he had seen this distance covered in some remarkably short spaces of time. He and Cartwright had been sitting together with their feet dangling in the water, watching the try-outs, and each keeping up the other's courage by what he imagined was keeping up his own. They indulged in scathing comments on each other's muscular development, and how unlikely he was to make the required time. Each, too, was scant of praise when any student gained special glory, since neither wanted the other to think he could not do equally well himself, should he but try hard enough. There had been so many volunteers for the racing team that they had been forced to try out the boys in groups of five, and because of the numbers to choose from, the judges were particularly strict. In the present quintet, besides Cartwright and Jack, were two seniors, one a tall lad of seventeen, with enormous hands and a great length of limb, the other small, heavily built, and apparently stiff and clumsy. The third was a sophomore, about sixteen, with bright red hair, his arms and chest still covered with last summer's freckles. Jack and Cart-

THE GREEN C

wright agreed that the tall senior had the best chance of coming in second.

As Jack stood waiting, in line with the others now, he had a misgiving that the tall senior might even come in first.

He heard a splash which he could scarcely realize was partly of his own making, then he kicked and paddled himself to the surface and started to swim, hoping he might be taking the right direction. He saw the tall senior several feet ahead, with the red-haired sophomore close beside him, and, in advance of them all, one he took for the other senior until he discovered that he who was struggling along on his left was not Cartwright.

His first thought was relief that Miskell was not there to see this. His second steadied his nerves and gave strength to his muscles in the determination to win out at all hazards. He realized that he had dived too deep, and therefore had made a very bad get-away. He swam with long, leaping strokes that had strength behind them and the power to endure indefinitely. Keeping his eye on Cartwright, still in the lead, he came abreast the red-haired sophomore, who showed signs of distress by the fact that he had changed his jerky overhand stroke for the crawl.

Cartwright touched the end of the tank

THE WAY TO THE C

and started back, and almost simultaneously the tall senior reached out in one long stroke and did likewise. Jack and the red-haired sophomore arrived together, and last of all the little senior, who, having made the turn, proceeded to get down to business. The tall senior overtook Cartwright, who disputed the lead with him. Jack crawled up upon them, and heard with a little shock of pleasure and surprise that Cartwright was breathing heavily and looking fagged under the strain. Suddenly a dark figure seemed to shoot past him in strange leaps; it was the stocky little senior making a sensational spurt. Jack saw the taller senior surge ahead of Cartwright, and the latter summon up all his strength for a final leap. The smaller senior touched home half a second before the tall one. Cartwright, scarcely able to raise his hand to do it, followed instantly, while Jack came in but one second later; but that second had lost him the team.

They had to help Cartwright out of the tank, and he sat dripping on the edge of it regaining his wind. Jack scarcely even panted as he drew himself up onto the tiled floor and stood trying to master his disappointment and face defeat like a Boy Scout or a friend of Mr. Carrington. It was one of the

THE GREEN C

triumphs of his life when he was able to smile at Cartwright after the latter had recovered sufficiently to look up at him. Cartwright smiled back.

"Did you make it?" he croaked.

Jack forced himself to look even happier and shook his head.

"You did," he said. "Congratulations." He went through the ceremony of shaking hands with himself.

"You were right behind me."

"Yes, but a second too late." It was on the tip of Jack's tongue to mention his deep dive and bad start, but he refrained.

Some one seized him by the shoulders.

"Say, youngster"—it was the voice of the swimming-director, Clark—"we've been watching you. You've got some fine lungs. You look as if you could live in the water for a week."

Jack flushed.

"Yes, sir," he murmured, wishing he knew the proper answer.

"We want you for water-polo. You'll get up speed later. Lots of 'em can make forty yards or so at a good enough clip, but there aren't so many that can come out of it as fresh as you are. You act as if you'd only walked it. Think you can play water-polo?"

THE WAY TO THE C

"You mean—I—I—I'm to be on the team?" Jack felt as if the sky had opened and left heaven bare to his view.

"Sure I do."

"O-oh, sa-ay!"

In the midst of his joy he caught Cartwright's eye. The latter was nodding at him delightedly, and it was now his turn to clasp his hands together—trembling hands they were still—in the good-fellowship sign of felicitation.

Jack felt the whole world was clean and friendly, that defeat had no bitterness and triumph no tyranny. He went home in a glow to meet a blow so heavy that, for a moment or two, his manhood staggered under it. It was when he was telling of his triumph at the supper-table that night that he saw a strange look in his mother's eye.

"Water-polo," she repeated, in a queer voice. "No, John; that I must forbid you to play."

Jack felt sure he was not hearing aright.

"Mother," he protested, dazed, "I'm on the team! They've elected me, and I've got a million times better show to get my C that way than by just racing. I can't back out now. I've joined."

"You may swim and race all you wish, but

THE GREEN C

I must forbid you to dive or play water-polo." His mother spoke in a quiet tone of command, a tone that admitted of no argument, one that she seldom used to any of her children.

"But, marm—" Jack heard his voice crack. His heart seemed to be breaking. "My letter—"

"Your mother has said enough, Jack," said his father, gently.

He felt the eyes of Edie and Emily fixed upon him steadily, and suddenly he remembered to have heard some time, years ago, as a sort of meaningless tradition, how his mother's brother had once been seriously injured in a game.

"All right, marm, don't you worry." He swallowed hard and spoke in a cheerful voice that brought a stinging moisture to his mother's eyes. "I'll cut it out." He nodded brightly to Edie, whose tears were unrestrained. "I guess it's got to be baseball for mine, after all," he said.

XVI

JACK'S LUCK

ALL day Saturday Jack maintained his air of cheerfulness, with the help of Edie, who showed her sympathy by devoting the whole morning to him. He discovered he could practise ball with her—at least he could pitch and knock out flies; and, though she was unable to catch any, she could act as a caddie, or a pet dog, chasing and returning them to him. Meantime, she watched him with keen, steady eyes, ready to detect in him any sign of unhappiness, a proceeding which, in spite of himself, aroused in Jack a spirit of martyrdom so that he unconsciously assumed a more tragic demeanor than his real feelings demanded.

In the afternoon Edie had to leave him to go to a party, and she felt as she dressed that she was a heartless butterfly in doing so. Jack assured her that he had lessons to make up or that he might go for a tramp, since the weather was so fine. Needless to say the tramp took precedence over the lessons, and it

THE GREEN C

was better so. The new air, the long stretches of brown meadows, with their hint of coming green, the call of robins, the sense of spring, all these tremendous things made themselves known to him as the important business of the world, so that his own little trouble vanished under it all, ashamed. He thought of Graham, and how he had taken it upon himself to urge him to obedience, however hard the decree. His respect for the big senior increased a thousandfold with the partial understanding of what Graham had resigned after he had burned his mother's letter, and in doing so, discovered and erased his "yellow streak." After all, Jack saw he was giving up so little in comparison, for, as he had told Edie, there was baseball left. Perhaps it was fated that he should win his C as he had set out to do it.

Sunday passed serenely, but Monday morning, with the chance of seeing Cartwright, and telling Miskell all, of having to report to Jansen, the captain of the polo team, he was assailed with panic. The depression he had put from him so bravely and persistently during the last two days asserted itself in full force. He went to see Jansen as soon as he got to school, and it was harder than he had thought.

"You're going to resign!" Jansen had ex-

JACK'S LUCK

claimed. "What for? Clark says with a little training you'd be one of the most valuable members of the team."

"I can't help it," said Jack, hastily. "I'm forbidden to play."

"You! You're the healthiest-looking specimen I ever saw. Clark wouldn't let you in on anything that was going to hurt you. Who's your doctor, anyway?"

At this moment Jack looked across the room and saw Big Graham standing at the open window, with his profile toward the class, talking with Cow Martin, who was known to have been the coiner of that hateful nickname "Little Fumbler."

"It's not the doctor at all," he said, his voice suddenly steady and natural. "It's my mother; she's nervous."

Jansen looked at him in an astonishment that died in confusion.

"I say—I'm sorry. Does she forbid swimming entirely, or just the game?"

"Only water-polo and diving."

"Try for speed, then. You have endurance. You may be able to make the team later for long-distance racing."

Miskell met him on the threshold of their class-room, and, seizing his chum's hand, pumped it excitedly.

THE GREEN C

"Oh you Jackie!—put it there, old sock! Say, what do you know about our little champion Downing! I knew you could do it! Have you been measured for your C yet?"

"Who told you?" asked Jack.

"Cartwright. And he seems tickled to death over it. He says he just got on to the swimming team by the skin of his teeth; but the guy in charge gave you a regular funeral oration on the kind of water-polo player you'd make."

"Cartwright said that?"

"He sure did. You made a hit with him Friday, somehow. He says you're a good sport."

"*Cartwright* did?"

There was a singing in Jack's ears. That the first to bestow on him the title he most longed to bear, should be one he had always regarded as his natural enemy!

"He says that you've got a better chance of winning your C than he, because you've only got to be in one victorious game, while he has to win three races," went on Miskell, eagerly.

Meantime, they had made their way to their desks, and so came up to Cartwright himself, who turned upon Jack quickly.

JACK'S LUCK

"I'm improving my wind," he said. "I envy your lungs, Downing! I'm going in for trotting, every day a little more. They say that's a good stunt. Then I exercise in the morning when I get up. How did you manage to get yours?"

"I don't know. I always could run far without feeling it, and swimming was the same."

"What did your folks say when you told them how you were snapped up for the polo team?"

"They said"—Jack looked from Cartwright to Miskell, so that both might be answered once for all—"that I had to resign."

"No!" gasped Miskell.

"He's just stringing us," said Cartwright, shrewdly.

"No," answered Jack, with a gravity they could not doubt, "I mean it. No water-polo for mine. I had an uncle that got badly hurt playing it, and they're scared it may run in the family."

"Great Cæsar!" Cartwright's eyes were full of real dismay. "You have to give up a chance like that!"

"Graham did a great sight more," answered Jack, simply.

In chapel it was announced that the boys

THE GREEN C

who thought of trying for the baseball team should meet in Room 8 during lunch period, and Theodore Cauldwell, the captain of the team, would decide with them when and where the try-out would take place.

Cartwright turned to Jack eagerly when they got back to their room.

"You're going to try to make it, aren't you?" he demanded.

"You bet I am," returned Jack.

"So am I. I'm not so crazy about getting a letter just by swimming, and I'm not sure I'd be able to, either. But it's something to be on the team, I can tell you! Do you practise?"

"Whenever I can."

"How about this afternoon? I know a dandy big lot where I generally go with my brother on Saturdays and Sundays."

Practise with Cartwright! The world seemed a little topsyturvy, but rather a nice world at that.

"All right," agreed Jack. "Miskell practises with me as a rule; maybe he'll come along, too. Will you, Misk?"

"Sure," answered Miskell, readily, "it's worth while just to watch you pitch."

"Are you going out for the team, too?" asked Cartwright.

JACK'S LUCK

"No; I'm no good at it," said Miskell, with a touch of shyness. "I never think of it."

"I never saw any one catch better," declared Jack, loyally. "He's a wonder with the mit."

"Oh, I catch pretty fair."

"Can't you pitch?"

"Distance," put in Jack, answering for him. "He's got a mighty good wing; but he can't place specially. That is, I've never seen him try fancy pitching. Can you do it, Misk?"

"No. Say, I can't do anything but get the balls when you pitch," grinned Miskell, uncomfortably. "I'm not chump enough to get a swelled head over that."

"How about hitting?" persisted Cartwright.

"Never saw him do any," admitted Jack, for the first time feeling that he might have been a little selfish in his monopoly of the bat.

"Well, we'll all have a shy at it this afternoon," was Cartwright's conclusion, as lesson-hours began.

In the meeting at lunch-time Tin Pan Cauldwell informed them the tests would be on Wednesday in the big field back of the school. He said particular attention would be given to pitching, catching, batting, and base-running.

"What else does he want us to do in a game

THE GREEN C

of baseball?" whispered Cartwright, still the irreverent and critical.

Cauldwell, as if in answer to this comment, went on to say that while quickness and understanding were necessary to the players of a really scientific game, there was no way of judging these merits in a try-out, and they would be useless if not backed by more substantial accomplishments. Tin Pan, as usual, in his debonair way, gave a speech that passed for a model of oratory all through the school.

That afternoon Jack, with friend, and one whom until to-day he had been pleased to regard as foe, could be seen making his way with bat and ball and glove to the field that Cartwright and his over-lauded brother had been wont to use. They started in by knocking out flies, and Jack declared that he relied mostly on his pitching, since batting was not his forte. Cartwright, on the other hand, lacked speed, but had a very true eye when it came to judging flies. He was a little afraid he had not enough strength behind his bat, but felt that was because he was still small and slight, and he thoroughly believed in the muscular training he was putting in for his swimming. Miskell was bashful about doing anything except catching their random balls and throwing them in to the one who was

JACK'S LUCK

pitching for the other. Finally, however, they persuaded him to take the bat, and he made them spend half an hour looking for the ball.

"Honest, that was an accident," he protested, to their admiration. "I'm no more likely to do it again than I am to—to"—he was at a loss for a simile impossible enough—"to be an honor student."

"When we find the ball," said Jack, "we'll let you try."

"This time sting it in," said Miskell, when that important sphere had been recovered. "Let Downing try. He sends 'em in faster than you."

"All right," answered Cartwright, good-naturedly, "I'll catch. Curve it if you can, Down."

As a matter of fact, since the notorious curve that had landed the ball in the little "lab" Jack had never tried to pitch straight. It was becoming second nature to him to twist the ball in hopes of another outshoot such as that. He, therefore, moistened his fingers, professionally, and let go. Cartwright caught it several inches to the right of where he expected it. Miskell had fanned the air.

"Corking!" cried Miskell, in delight over Jack's triumph. "Say, that looked like Doc Hall's signature."

THE GREEN C

"Can you do that again?" asked Cartwright, in an awed voice. "Not many grown-up men could do that. My brother is twenty-two, and he couldn't begin to bend one that way."

"I'll try," said Jack.

"Oh, you can do it easy!" averred Miskell.

"Say, you attend to business." Jack suddenly remembered that they were trying Miskell's hitting, and not his pitching. "Get on the job! You've got to get me on these."

"I'd need to ride on a streak of lightning with a loop in it to do it," chuckled Miskell.

"Aw, cut out the goo." Jack flushed and tingled under the compliment. "Ready, Cartwright?"

"Let her go."

Jack put all his knowledge into this throw, backed with all his strength and all his will-power. He felt the ball leave his fingers with a jerk that seemed to sever his arm. He heard a crack and a shout; but he could think of nothing save the most excruciating pain in his shoulder as he stood rigid, with his eyes closed, trying to keep back the desire to scream.

"He got it, he got it!" Cartwright was yelling, jubilantly, "and the good lord Harry only knows where he slugged it to! And *what* a curve! But you couldn't fool him! Quick, let's find it before it's lost for good!"

JACK'S LUCK

Miskell, however, had dropped the bat and was at Jack's side.

"What's the matter?" he was demanding, breathlessly, and with scared eyes.

"My arm!" gulped Jack. "Oh—oh, *Gee!*"

Miskell called Cartwright, who was already trotting out in the direction the ball had taken after it had struck the end of the bat. He now returned, still chortling over Miskell's hit, but the sight of his friends' faces put an end to all his thoughts of baseball.

"What happened? What's the matter?" he cried, quickly.

"His arm," explained Miskell, in frightened tones. "He broke it or something."

"Downing," gasped Cartwright, in a horror more professional than humanitarian, "you didn't throw it out?"

"I don't know," muttered Jack, between his teeth. "But—oh, say, it—it's—fierce!"

"Does the whole arm hurt like blazes?" asked Cartwright.

Miskell thought the question very ill-timed.

"No, he's doing that because it feels so good," he returned, bitingly. "Can't you think of something we can do? We ought to get a doctor, oughtn't we? Aw, say, can't you suggest anything? What would your

THE GREEN C

big brother do now?" He felt this was masterly sarcasm.

"This," said Cartwright, promptly. "You hold on to him on that side with all your strength. Now, Downing—"

Jack felt Cartwright grasp his arm roughly and pull. He heard himself shriek once before he could prevent it. He felt he was being torn in two, or that Cartwright, in a frenzy of rage at Miskell's taunt, was endeavoring to rip his arm completely off. He grew sick as the sky and field slipped together and darkened before his eyes. Then he heard a faint click that might have told him, had he been better informed, that Cartwright's big brother would have done the only thing in the world there was to do. The displaced joint had gone back into its socket.

"Downing—Jack! He's going to faint!" He heard Miskell's terror-stricken voice dazedly.

"Shove his head down!" They grasped him by the back of the neck and proceeded to do so, nor did he feel he had the strength to resist. A moment after, as he stood thus doubled up, the blood rushed to his face, and everything became clear.

"Let me up!" he exclaimed. "Look out for my arm! What did you do to it, any-

JACK'S LUCK

way?" The intense pain was gone; only an extreme tenderness remained in the muscles.

"It had slipped from the socket. You must always pull them, and they go back. That happened to my brother in a football game once, and he went right on playing again. It was lucky you mentioned my brother, or I would never have thought of it," added Cartwright to Miskell, genially, "and the longer you leave them the harder they are to manage."

"Does it hurt yet?" Miskell asked Jack.

"A little." Jack tried bravely to suppress the truth. "But it's much better." He turned to Cartwright, gratefully. "Say, did your brother really go right on playing football after it?"

"He did, honest. Of course," he explained, "it wasn't his whole arm that got pulled out. I think it was just a finger."

Jack felt a little relieved.

"I guess it must have been," he murmured, shaking his head. "Oh, look here"—a sudden alarm spread over his face—"is this going to put me out of commission for long?"

"I don't know," hesitated Cartwright. "It was the first thing I thought of. We'd better go to a doctor right away and find out."

"Oh, Downing!" There were almost tears in Miskell's eyes. "That would be the limit!

THE GREEN C

Oh no; I don't believe any one could run in that sort of luck! Can they, Cartwright? Gee, I'm sure it's all right! I bet what Cartwright did has fixed you up so's you'll be all right to-morrow. You said if they did it right away it was all right, didn't you? How long was your brother's finger lame?"

"I'm not sure it was his finger," said Cartwright, as one who is anxious to be accurate at all hazards. "Let's see. Yes, I think it was; but they didn't pull it till after the game, and he went on playing with it out of joint, and that's why it never really got back. It was delayed too long. That's it."

"Do you suppose this is quite back?" Jack looked worried.

"Yes, I heard it snap. But we'd better see a doctor, anyway."

"Let's get the ball first," said Jack. "Did Miskell hit it?"

"Did he hit it!" repeated Cartwright, laughing. "I guess it's sticking in the sun somewhere after the swat he gave it."

It might have been, since they hunted for it in vain, and finally, fearing lest they were keeping Jack from medical aid too long, they had to give it up.

Jack's doctor commended Cartwright highly for his prompt treatment, a compliment

JACK'S LUCK

Cartwright, with unexpected modesty, passed on to Miskell with a murmured, "He reminded me of what they did to my big brother once . . ." But, according to the doctor, Jack had sustained a very severe sprain, and his arm would be weak and tender for a long time.

"What do you mean by a long time?" asked Jack, tragically.

"About a month or so. You've given yourself a bad wrench there, my boy."

"A month!" Jack swallowed hard. "You mean pitching is out of the question for a month?"

"Pitching?" exclaimed the doctor. "Baseball!"

He turned away from the look in the six wide eyes that were staring at him. Jack shook himself, and was the first to speak.

"No baseball this spring, eh?"

"It's only the beginning of April," said the doctor. "Maybe you can do a little playing around the middle or end of May. Quietly, of course."

"Thanks," said Jack, and smiled the Boy Scout smile, a piteous affair. "All right. I'll keep on the sling, and tell mother about the applications. Come on, fellers. Good-by, doctor."

THE GREEN C

They followed him out as if they were going to a funeral.

"Say, Downing," said Cartwright, as they parted on the corner. "You're—you're having the worst luck in the world. I—I'm—well, I wish I could give you my arm—that's all." They shook hands and Cartwright hurried away. Miskell walked all the way home with Jack, shrouded in a gloomy silence broken only by such comments as "It's punk!" "Oh, it's rotten!" "Why wasn't it me?"

"Misk," said Jack, when they reached his gate, "you did some pretty nifty hitting to-day. You're going to try to make the team, aren't you?"

"What would I do that for? I don't know anything about baseball, and I care less. Now, if I could only trade shoulders with you!"

"Aw! you're a nut!" Jack left him in disgust.

Wednesday Jack, with his arm in a sling, was down with the others watching the try-outs. He was somewhat repaid for his accident by the interest and sympathy he aroused in all the seniors he knew. Jansen pronounced himself flabbergasted at Jack's misfortunes, and he looked it.

Boy after boy stepped to the bat, ran his

JACK'S LUCK

bases, caught his fly, pitched his three balls, and one after another was chosen or rejected. The judges were not easily bluffed. Jack, with Cartwright, Miskell, and Cameron, sat near them and watched their keen faces. Jack noted with a pang that Bub Stanton seemed to have a good deal to say.

Cameron was called on, and not chosen. Cartwright came through fairly with his catching, but fell down when it came to pitching and base-running. His batting was true, but not heavy enough. They advised him to keep on trying till he was better grown, as he had the "makings."

Miskell refused flatly to "get up and be a monkey for all those guys to sneer at," and the test was nearly over when Jack, in desperation, appealed to Bub Stanton to make Miskell take his chance.

"He's a fine hitter," he told the senior, "and he can throw distance, and he catches better than any one I know. He's just modest."

Miskell went to the bat protesting. He knocked three very creditable flies; one was good enough to rouse the spectators to a little roar of surprise. He loped his bases in excellent time, and, still protesting, caught flies and grounders in the field, and flung them home without effort.

THE GREEN C

"My hat!" gasped Cauldwell. "He's a gem!"

"Did they choose that horrid Cartwright for baseball, too?" inquired Edith, that night. She had not yet become reconciled to the enemy.

"No," answered Jack. "But, see here, Edie, you've been practising with me. I wonder what kind of a player *you'd* make."

"What are you talking about?" Edie looked scared.

"Miskell," replied Jack, simply. "He made the team."

XVII

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

IT was some time before Jack realized that all chance of winning his C this year was gone. For a week after the accident he even enjoyed the excitement of wearing his arm bound up, of being asked sympathetic questions, and of trying to make up his mind whether he preferred being excused entirely from written work in school or making weird attempts at left-hand caligraphy. But soon people began to forget how unusually unfortunate he had been, and looked upon him as no different from other mortals. Gradually he came to realize the vacancy left in his life with his greatest ambition taken out of it. He tried to revive his interest in the Boy Scouts; but, while he still longed for the camping and the life they set forth so charmingly in their yellow book, the knowledge that Cartwright and Miskell were too busy to be interested just now made him postpone thinking of it seriously himself. Edie, always

THE GREEN C

interested in behalf of science, wanted her brother to return to that; but, though the visit to Professor Marshfield had fanned a dying flame, the ban on laboratory work quenched it utterly. For a time Jack took refuge in photography, but gave up in disgust over the inefficiency of his old-fashioned little kodak.

So April passed and May began. There had been three swimming meets. In the first Cartwright was left hopelessly out of all count. In the second he swam against freshmen of other high schools and won one race, getting a place in another. In the third he won in another freshman contest, and came third in a race with mixed classes. His letter was imminent. Miskell, too, had made an advancement, and from being a mere substitute was promoted to left field on the regular team, a position he held with his characteristic bewildered modesty.

Only Jack had no honors to show for his year's work, and he was heart-sick at the thought.

It was like Edie to suggest that he should turn his attention to his lessons. It was like her, too, to hint to their parents that they should offer a reward for a card of B's instead of C's this term. She knew Jack wanted a good kodak, wherewith to gain Boy Scout

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

honors, and in sheer desperation, having nothing better to strive for, Jack set all his fighting powers to work to conquer his school tasks.

It came hard at first, for he had never really studied before, but by degrees the habit of concentration simplified things for him. Jack's marks began to look better, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that they represented legitimate work.

The Saturday afternoon when Miskell got his C by fielding in a winning game closed with the Saturday evening swimming meet, in which Cartwright won his third race. The next afternoon Jack and his two distinguished comrades set out for a walk in the May woods and fields to talk it all over.

"But your arm ought to be all right now." Miskell broke off in the middle of a vivid description of just how it felt to be going up to the bat in a real game.

"I tried it this morning," answered Jack, doing his best to speak easily and naturally. "I couldn't do anything before it started to go back on me."

"Can't the doctor do anything?" asked Cartwright. "It's funny it should take so blessed long to get back."

"He just tells me to cut out fooling with

THE GREEN C

it so much," said Jack, glumly. "He says to forget it."

"Some people are just natural idiots," observed Miskell, disrespectfully.

They tramped along in silence for some time, and Jack realized their sympathy, though they seldom said more than this.

"I often think," said Miskell, slowly, "when I'm out there in the field, of how you'd sting 'em in. Oh, say, Downing, if they should ever once see your curves you'd be pitcher in less than a week. It's the only thing that consoles me. I'll probably be a fielder till I graduate, unless my luck goes back on me and they find out what kind of a bluff I am, and kick me off the team before. But you'll step right into the star place when you start in, you can bet."

"I may have forgotten how to pitch when I can use my arm again." Jack was inclined to look on the gloomy side.

"It wouldn't take you long to get it back," put in Cartwright, eagerly. "My brother says that once you know how you never lose it. I asked him, and he says that next year you'll be able to pitch much better, because your hand will be bigger and your arm longer, and you'll be stronger altogether. And listen," he went on, eagerly; "you remember

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

Clark, the swimming-director, who wanted you for water-polo?"

"Yes."

"Well, he asked me about you yesterday. He wanted to know if you were increasing your speed, and I told him how you had put your arm out of business. He was awfully sorry, and said again that you ought to go in for long-distance and endurance tests. He seemed to think you were a regular wonder in the water. We're going to have an outdoor meet in June, and if you could get on the team in time for that you could win three races easy. There'll be a whole week of it, you know. If only your arm would be all right."

"Say, are you sure about that?" Jack's eyes glowed.

"As sure as we can be. Other schools have such a mean way of backing out at the last minute, and they seem to be sort of scary about the lake, somehow, when they've been trained in pools. But Clark is going to do his best. He says that outdoor tests are the only kind. I'm really not much of a swimmer. I've got speed, but I'd swap it all in a second for half your wind."

"I wish I could take you up," grinned Jack. They walked on, comforting Jack and pre-

THE GREEN C

tending to regard their letters as accidents in comparison with what he really deserved, until they cut into the woods off the regular road, and so came upon matters even more interesting than their school games. For here Jack could use much that he had culled from the yellow book of scouting. First he showed them how to find the north, and hence the other points of the compass, by the time of day.

"You point the hour-hand of your watch to the sun and measure back to noon half-way," said Jack. They had to hunt for a spot of sunlight, and then were surprised and delighted to find their reckoning fairly correct. Jack tried to explain it, but soon came to grief. "All I know is that if you had a decent watch that marked the whole twenty-four hours you wouldn't have to figure it out in halves," he wound up, lamely, for the third time.

Then he tried to show them how to measure the height of a tree by their own shadows; but after seeking vainly for a tree sufficiently isolated to cast a distinct shadow they gave it up as a bit of unnecessary learning.

"Now, that compass business would come in handy anywhere. If you have a watch you need never get lost except at night," declared Miskell.

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

"At night you have the pole-star," said Jack, promptly.

"Yes; but did you ever know any one but an astronomer who could find the pole-star?" inquired the incredulous Miskell.

So Jack drew a diagram for them which he guaranteed to be an unfailing guide for those who could not distinguish the most important and useful star in the heavens.

"But what do you do with the pole-star when you do find it?" asked Miskell.

The suggestions he received were hardly feasible. Gradually, when they had exhausted their ingenuity along the line of extravagance, Jack broke the news to him gently that it was an infallible pointer to the north. Jack felt it was necessary to do this in case Miskell should ever need the information and perish because they had chaffed him instead of putting him right. His Boy Scout ambitions were returning in great bounds.

"What else can you show us?" asked Cartwright, when Miskell's ignorance had been attended to.

"Measure distance," answered Jack, flattered by the question. "You can measure by sound. When you hear a shot you count the seconds between the time you see the smoke and the time you hear the crack, and

THE GREEN C

multiply by eleven hundred feet. You see, sound travels eleven hundred feet in a second." He was sure of his explanation this time.

"But do you hear the shot before you see the smoke? I thought it was the other way." Miskell was puzzled.

"So it is."

"Well, how can you measure backward? When you've heard the shot the smoke's all over."

"You begin to count when you see the smoke, you chump."

"But how do you know there's going to be smoke till after the shot?" Miskell, when he became logical, was always a little depressing.

"Sit on him," advised Cartwright.

"There's a way of measuring distance across a creek," said Jack, suddenly. "Oh, say, that's a bully stunt. Come on, the creek isn't far, and we can try it. You make an equilateral triangle out of sticks and point it at some object across the bank; then shove it on in a straight line till you point at the object again, then multiply by seven-eighths. Understand?"

They did not hesitate to admit they didn't, which made Jack all the more anxious to demonstrate it. They lost no time, but has-

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

tened in the direction of the creek that flowed through those woods and emptied into the town lake. The stream was not wide, but very deep in places, and full of rocks and waterfalls that made it impossible to navigate. They could hear it roaring from some distance away, for, though it was quiet enough in the summer and in the ice-bound winter, it broke loose in spring, indulging in floods and torrents that sometimes hurled the boulders from the banks and tore up bushes and trees.

"Gee, it's great to-day!" exclaimed Miskell. "They say it hasn't been so full and heavy in years."

For a while they stood watching it as it churned past through the rocks near the shore, out into the deep mid-stream.

"I guess it's about twenty feet across here," calculated Jack. "There's a falls below; that's what we hear. Now let's measure my way, and see if it comes out right."

"Gosh, it's fascinating." Cartwright perched himself, boy-like, on the top of a slippery stone. "It makes you feel like getting in and swimming."

"It's clean, isn't it?" Miskell picked up a stone, instinctively, and tried to scale it.

"Here, you chaps, get to work." Jack was

THE GREEN C

hunting around for the means of constructing his apparatus. "I want three sticks; two others as long as this. We can cut them even."

"Say, did you see that?" cried Miskell, delightedly. "That hopped twice." He stooped for further ammunition. "How many can you make, Down?"

"I'm not pitching this season," returned Jack.

"I bet it would take nerve to swim against that current," observed Cartwright.

"You fellers are dippy over your own business," interposed Jack. "Quit talking shop and get to work. I thought you wanted to know how wide that creek is?"

"Just a second—I want to pitch this one," begged Miskell.

"Let's see how cold it is?" suggested Cartwright.

The next minute there was a splash and Miskell yelled. Cartwright, not ceasing his investigation at temperature, was now testing the speed of the current and finding out just the amount of nerve necessary to combat it.

"He fell in!" cried Miskell, jumping about on the rock as if it had suddenly become red-hot. "Oh, Downing, what 'll I do? I can't swim!"

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

"*You do!*" Jack rushed up to look. "What have you got to do with it? He's the one that has to swim, and he can. All right in there, Cartwright? Bring a branch, Misk, and I'll watch and get in if he needs me."

The suddenness of the plunge, combined with the coldness of the water, was doing its best to complete Cartwright's panic. Instead of swimming directly to either bank, he was battling with the current with hysterical futility, and was rapidly becoming weak and desperate.

"Swim for the bank!" called Jack, perceiving this. "Don't bother about landing up here—the falls are way off!"

At the mention of the falls Cartwright's struggle began anew. He was breathing in sharp, frightened sobs, and was losing distance from the rock. Jack grew anxious as he watched him.

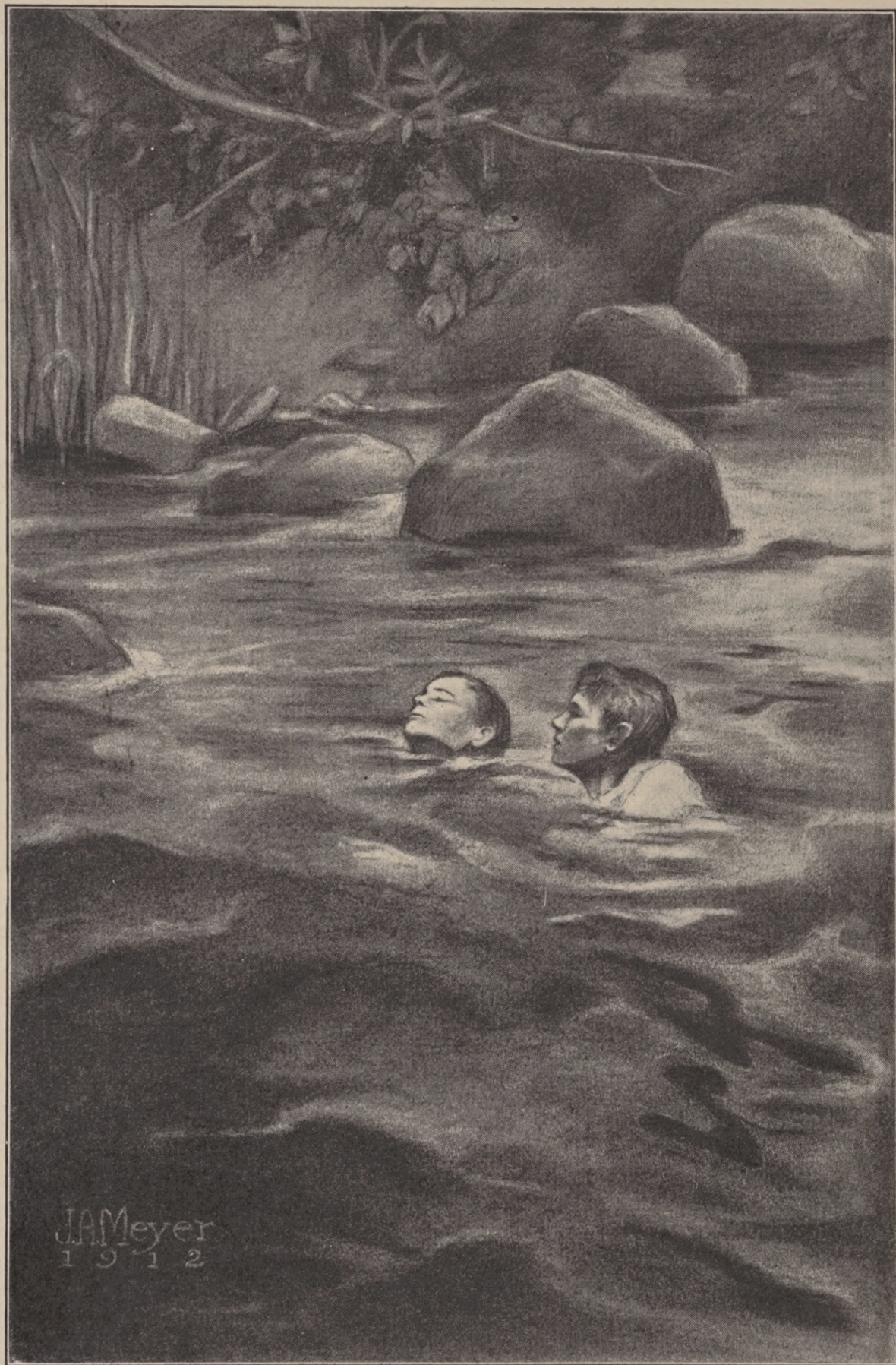
"Is this long enough?" called Miskell, from the wood.

"Yes, hurry!" Jack did not take his eyes off Cartwright, but divested himself of his coat and boots, to be ready if his friend should lose any more ground. Suddenly Cartwright threw up his arms and went under in utter despair, and Jack leaped in.

In a moment he had clasped Cartwright

THE GREEN C

around the shoulders and felt the other clutch at him blindly. He remembered, with a flash of horror, having often read of that dread grasp as they both sank together. When they came up, he saw the current had taken them several feet down-stream and was drawing them on irresistibly. He thought of the falls, and realized fully Cartwright's terror of them. In another moment he had raised his fist and struck Cartwright between the eyes. He felt the dead weight of his friend's body as they went under the second time, and he was stricken with panic at what he had done. Cartwright could no longer hinder him, nor draw him down, after this; but neither was he able to help himself in any way. When Jack came to the surface he was grasping Cartwright's collar with his right hand, and with his left struck out valiantly for the shore. The horrible thought occurred to Jack that Cartwright might be dead. Perhaps he was drowned already, or the blow Jack had given him might have been more powerful than he had supposed. What if, in his effort to save his comrade, he had actually slain him? He paddled desperately. His weak arm was beginning to feel the strain, and a sharp pain shot through his shoulder, bringing with it a new dread, the dread that



HE SEEMED TO APPROACH THE SHORE BY INCHES

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

the bone might slip from its socket again. Jack set his teeth. Whatever happened, he determined that the fingers of that hand should not release their grasp.

He tried to think of nothing but the point on the shore where he intended to land. He forced himself to strike out regularly and evenly, to breathe on the out-stroke, not to think, and, above all, not to hear the horrible sound of the falls growing ever louder and nearer.

He seemed to approach the shore by inches. He knew he was far out of reach of Miskell's friendly branch. Now he was in line with a border of broken rocks, with the danger of being crushed against them in the rushing waters. He aimed as best he could for one of these stones, and, holding Cartwright in a way to protect his head when the jar should come, allowed the current to ram him up to one of the slime-covered boulders, where he clung desperately, bracing against the powerful flow of the stream. He sought in vain for some sort of footing, feeling he would be unable to hold out this way for long. He felt Cartwright's drooping body drag at his other arm. He shouted with all the breath he had left. Not fifteen feet beyond were the falls, with the afternoon sunlight making rainbows

THE GREEN C

in their foam. The freezing water set all his bones to ache, now that he had time to think, and Cartwright began sinking from his grasp.

Suddenly he heard a voice, then voices, indistinguishable. He had been told that this was a common illusion with drowning men. He struggled to keep his hold on the rock. Cartwright grew unbearably heavy, the roaring of the falls was deafening, and all went black as he felt his friend's body drop away.

He opened his eyes and looked up into the pale, yellowish sky, broken and shielded with tiny emerald leaves. There was the smell of burning wood in his nostrils, and he could hear the snap and crackle of a fire above the rush of waters. Then he discovered that he was tightly bound up in a saffron-colored blanket, and he tried to free his arms.

Miskell's face appeared between him and the sky, a face almost comical under the disordered hair, and with its wide, staring eyes, were it not for the tears streaming unheeded down the lean, freckled cheeks.

"Downing—say, Down! Jack, are you all right, too?"

"Where's Cartwright?"

"Safe. He's here. He's all right. They've given him whisky, and he's just woke up. They heard me when I was yelling for help.

THE WIDTH OF THE CREEK

Two men. They live 'round here. They got you out just—just—just in time. Oh, Jack!"

Miskell's head went down all at once upon the yellow blanket, and Jack wonderingly felt him sob and sob.

XVIII

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

“AND do you mean to tell me that no matter what heroic act a boy may perform, it does not count against what he would do from a purely athletic standpoint?” demanded Mrs. Cartwright, in Dr. Hall’s office Monday noon.

“Not toward this end, madam.”

“That my boy is allowed to wear his high-school letter, the reward of excellent swimming, while the boy who, under tremendous risks, saved his life because, as a matter of fact, my son’s swimming was not able enough to keep his head above water in an emergency—that that boy must have nothing to show for his heroism?”

“I fear you do not understand, madam,” began Dr. Hall, a little disturbed.

“No, I do not,” answered Mrs. Cartwright, promptly. “To me it seems like placing competition in a lot of unimportant games far above manhood, courage, and skill. No; I

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

confess I do not understand." Mrs. Cartwright was rapidly losing her temper.

"But, my dear madam, a letter does not necessarily stand for these splendid qualities you have mentioned, and which no one for a moment doubts may be attributed to young John Downing. There are hundreds of boys possessing them that have never worn their school or college insignia. A letter is like a diploma. Any boy can win one by obeying set rules and conforming to set conditions, and in no other way. You, yourself, would be one of the first to cry out 'Ridiculous!' if we were to give a diploma to Downing tomorrow as a reward. A letter is something aimed for definitely, and acquired only under special regulations. It is an accepted sign to all other high schools that its owner has accomplished certain purely athletic feats."

"My son got one for swimming." Mrs. Cartwright commenced to muster her arguments.

"Yes; so I am pleased to hear."

"Yet, while in swimming, he had to be rescued by one who swims many times better. You admit it takes a fine swimmer to do what the Downing boy did?"

"Yes, but—"

"There are no 'buts.' He's a better swim-

THE GREEN C

mer than Charles. Yet Charles has the C. I cannot see it."

"All I can say, madam"—Dr. Hall realized hopelessly that this debate could go on in its present circuit until doomsday—"is that it is the rule that governs the giving of the letter."

"Well, it's a very strange rule."

"All boys' rules are strange, madam; and as the boys grow to be men their rules become stranger," said the Doctor, sententiously.

Mrs. Cartwright rose.

"Then can't you do anything?"

"The only thing I can do, I fear, will not give you any satisfaction. I can recommend the athletic council to meet and consider this case very specially. They might be brought to regard it in the light of an endurance test, or as a service to the team, and therefore to the school."

All this Cartwright told to Jack the next morning before the announcement in chapel of the meeting of the Cleveland High School Athletic Association council, on "an important and very special matter." Jack upheld Dr. Hall's arguments ever more faintly to Cartwright's putting forth his mother's side. He became troubled and uncertain in his own mind. He had once told Edie that he did not

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

care how he got his C, so long as he got it; but this was not so. It would not be entirely satisfactory if his letter meant one thing, and Bub Stanton's, for example, another. Yet there was allurements in the thought of being able to wear the green C after all, to make good his promise at the end of his freshman year, no longer secretly to envy Cartwright and Miskell for having gained theirs so promptly.

He had left Cartwright and Miskell, and turned down his own street that afternoon after school, and was walking along deep in his disturbing meditations, when the sound of a motor horn attracted his attention. He jumped aside instinctively, thinking it a signal to clear the road, then looked up to meet the eyes of some one who would have been only vaguely familiar to him if it were not for the red motor-car in which he sat.

"Mr. Carrington!" exclaimed Jack.

"Get in; I'm going to your house," said Mr. Carrington, throwing open the door. Jack climbed in quickly, and the same grim-faced chauffeur started the car.

"Now, how have you been? Did you make your letter yet? And how's that chap that was going to try to beat you to it?" Mr. Carrington remembered all the details too well.

THE GREEN C

"He got it," said Jack; "so did Miskell. Did I tell you about Miskell, my chum?"

"But what about you?"

"I didn't."

"How's that? Hard luck? Or didn't you try?"

"Threw my arm out. I went in for pitching, you see."

"Um, I see. Wasn't there anything else?"

"Swimming. We have the use of the pool twice a week, now. But I hadn't the speed." Jack's heart was beating fast; he wondered if he would have the strength to forebear telling of his own heroism, and his chance to get his letter now. He knew his mother would speak of it when they reached the house.

"Couldn't you work up to it?" asked Mr. Carrington.

"My arm kept bothering me."

"Great Cæsar! what did you do to it?"

"Threw it out."

"But that's nothing. At least, a boy can't throw his arm out so badly as all that. When did you do it?"

"About a month ago."

"And it's still weak?"

"For pitching."

Mr. Carrington shook his head as the big car turned in at the Downing gateway.

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

"Well, if it's any consolation to know it, it requires considerable strength to put your arm out like that. A boy very seldom accomplishes that feat."

Jack glowed. It was the first really comforting word on the subject he ever had received.

He was right in supposing his adventure of Sunday would be one of the first things his mother would mention, and he was glad he had not spoken of it himself. Mr. Carrington looked over at him with an approving glance that warmed his heart. Nor did his mother stop there.

"John, perhaps, does not know how much another matter has meant to me, too, Mr. Carrington," she said, gently. "I have not said anything to him about it; but I want him to realize how his giving up water-polo at my request gave me more than merely my peace of mind. He did it cheerfully and promptly, though he had just been elected to the team, and had the chance for his letter, which, you may not know, is the desire of his heart. It gave me a glimpse of his character as a boy, that leads me to hope for much from my son when he becomes a man."

Jack did not know where to look. He felt it would be far easier to face punishment

THE GREEN C

than this sort of praise. He had not thought his mother ever felt like this, because she had never spoken in this way before. He knew that when he could go away somewhere in a corner and think, he might get real pleasure out of it all. As it was, he wished he were invisible, or else not there, just then. Mr. Carrington swung the conversation around adroitly.

"Is it so wonderful to find a boy or a man doing what his mother does so often without any thought of praise?"

"What do you mean?"

"Giving up the heart's desire with a smile," answered Mr. Carrington. "I never knew how my own mother hated and dreaded football till my college days were over. For once let us have the honor of self-denial."

When he rose to go Mr. Carrington declared that he did not want to miss Jack's father again, so he would call at his office to see him; and he asked Jack if he wanted to go along.

"Do you like motoring enough to make an extra long trip of it?" he asked, as they got into the car.

"Do I!" Jack's eyes sparkled.

"I just want to tell you," said Mr. Carrington, when they got started, "that the drown-

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

ing story is a good one; but I like the water-polo one better."

"What else could I do?" Jack flushed.

"Nothing. But not every one would have faced it so promptly and cheerfully, that's all. It's hard on you to have to throw out your arm right on top of it, so as to lose the C completely."

"Mr. Carrington," said Jack, after a pause, "there's something bothering me, and I'd like your advice."

"Let her go, son."

"It's just that—well, the chap I—I—saved—Cartwright—his mother went to Doc Hall and raised Cain about her son having a letter for swimming and—me none."

"Bless these dear women!" said Mr. Carrington, with twinkling eyes.

"She got so sore about it that they called a special council meeting to find out if they couldn't consider what I did as winning endurance tests, and giving me enough points to make a letter out of it for me."

"Um—that sounds plausible and mighty tempting."

"Is it all right to take it?" Jack's clear, round, blue eyes searched his friend's face.

"Why are you asking?"

"I don't know."

THE GREEN C

"Why aren't you just delighted to take the letter if they're willing to give it?"

"I'm hanged if I know."

Jack shook his head and stared in front of him at the chauffeur's broad back unseeingly.

"Don't you think you deserve it?" asked Carrington, after a pause.

"I can swim better than Cartwright, and he has one," answered Jack.

"But—" supplemented Mr. Carrington.

Jack looked up at him quickly.

"How did you know there was a 'but'?" he demanded, somewhat startled.

Mr. Carrington smiled at him without speaking. Jack again turned away his head.

"There is a 'but'," he admitted, "and there isn't an ounce of sense in it. I tried to argue it with Cartwright, but I couldn't. Only it doesn't seem right."

"Can you understand why?"

"Well—it's not the regular C."

"In other words," interpreted Mr. Carrington, "though there may be a thousand better things than winning a few races and being on a victorious team, the letter is given for that, and cannot be used for anything else."

"Yes," said Jack; "I ought to feel that way."

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

"Also," said Mr. Carrington, "it's rather like setting out from a starving camp to hunt for food and bringing back some gorgeous bird you had bagged—a magnificent specimen, but impossible to eat."

Jack laughed and nodded.

"Something like that. And then it's like being paid for something you don't do for pay."

"Here's a poem for you. Say it after me." Mr. Carrington noted the look on Jack's face at the mention of poetry. "It isn't very mushy," he added, grinning, and recited the little quatrain Jack never forgot:

Not the laurel, but the race,
Not the quarry, but the chase,
Not the hazard, but the play,
Make me, Lord, enjoy alway.

"You see," said Mr. Carrington, "you've set out to *win* your C, and just *getting* it isn't enough."

"Say, it's all right," announced Cartwright, excitedly, to Jack the next morning. "The boys stopped in last night after the meeting to tell mother. Bub Stanton spoke for them, and what he didn't say about you was a caution. He finished up by thanking mother in the name of the Association for raising a

THE GREEN C

kick about it all. You see, they've decided that it's quite regular in this case, after all, because by saving me you were benefiting the athletic standing of the high school by rescuing one of the members of the swimming team. Me!" grinned Cartwright. "I began to feel important till I made myself remember it was because they want to give you your letter."

"I didn't save you because you were a member of the team, and I'll tell 'em so," said Jack, gruffly.

"You're not going to stand up and refuse it!" Cartwright looked amazed.

Jack turned away to put his books in his desk.

"Misk will be late if he doesn't hurry," he remarked, casually.

"Are you going to have the nerve to tell Bub Stanton and the rest you don't want the letter, after all their meetings and trouble?" persisted Cartwright.

"Did I ever speak to you about a man named Carrington?" asked Jack, irrelevantly.

"Listen to me, and answer decently." Cartwright was growing exasperated. "Are you or are you not going to have the face to refuse your high-school letter when it's offered to you?"

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

"He's one of the finest ducks I know," commented Jack, dreamily.

"Who is?"

"Mr. Carrington."

"What in thunder has he to do with all this?" roared Cartwright.

"Oh, quite a lot. He taught me some awfully good poetry. Want to hear it?"

"See here!" Cartwright dove into his desk and brought out a book through which he hunted vigorously. "I've got something to show you that may change your mind."

"That's interesting. I'd like to see what you think would change my mind in this case," said Jack, watching curiously.

"I was going to destroy it when I found it the other day. Then the talk of the open-air meet came up, and I knew you might still have the chance to make good, so I thought I'd keep it in case you did. Now, I'm glad I did. It may wake you up. Here—look."

He handed Jack a little scrap of paper that had been crumpled and dust-ridden in the corner of his desk all year. It had since been straightened out and pressed between the leaves of a book until it had resumed some semblance of its original smoothness. There was something scribbled on it which Jack read.

THE GREEN C

"My brother had a C when he graduated. I'm going to get one, too."

"Turn it over," said Cartwright.

On the other side Jack beheld his own handwriting, and a queer pang shot through him.

"So am I."

At this moment a delegation of four from the Cleveland High School Athletic Association entered the room and made straight for him: Cartwright drew back and watched expectantly.

George Jansen, the head of the aquatic-sports division, was the spokesman. He had prepared his speech, and delivered it as one who is in fear of forgetting what he has to say:

"John Downing, in view of your extraordinary services to mankind, Cleveland High School, and especially to the swimming team, the Cleveland High School Athletic Association wishes to confer on you the privilege of wearing the high-school letter wherever and whenever you choose, and that you shall have all the considerations that accrue to any one wearing said letter, and furthermore—furthermore—er—though it is unusual to give—to grant the letter except for certain—certain—er—things—achievements—stated achievements, we find that we can give it to you be-

THE FORGOTTEN NOTE

cause you rescued one of the members of the high-school swimming team from drowning, and in doing so did us—did Cleveland—a big favor.”

There was no one in the school who could make a speech like Tin Pan Cauldwell, and every one else was painfully aware of the fact. That is why Jansen was breathless and perspiring when he broke off at last with the knowledge that Tin Pan himself had been standing listening to his miserable attempt. The last person in the world he was thinking of was the person he had addressed, until he became conscious that Jack was answering, and was saying something that all the others seemed to find extraordinary.

“Please don’t misunderstand me,” Jack was begging; “nobody wants it more than I do. Nobody would try harder to win it if he ever got the chance. But I can’t just up and *take* it. It isn’t the C if you get it that way. I want the right to make it as you fellows have all made it—square—according to the rules of the game.”

“But don’t you see—” Jansen blundered.

“Come on,” said Tin Pan; “the kid’s right. He wants the fun of winning it for himself. And you needn’t worry about him. He’ll do it.”

THE GREEN C

"We're proud of you," said Bub Stanton. "You've shown us what it is to be a good sport."

They trailed out of the room, and Cartwright and Jack were left face to face with no word to say.

There was a tiny wad of crumpled paper near Jack's left foot.

XIX

THE LAUREL

"**S**AY, Down," said Cartwright, the next day, "Clark wants to see you at the pool to-morrow. It's important."

"Clark? How do you know?"

"He told me."

"When did you see him?"

"Tuesday. Swimming."

"Tuesday? What were you doing at the tank on Tuesday?" Jack looked surprised.

"Miskell asked me to go and see if he'd improved any," answered Cartwright, glibly.

"Has he?"

"Sure. Heaps."

"Cartwright"—Jack sat on the edge of his desk and eyed his friend admiringly—"you've got more nerve than any one else I know."

"What, now?"

"Miskell was growling all day yesterday because he had a cold and his mother had made him cut the pool the day before."

Cartwright flushed.

THE GREEN C

"Well, all right, I'll admit it. I went to see Clark about it specially yesterday; but that doesn't change his wanting you to go there tomorrow. He made me give him a whole motion-picture of the rescue Sunday, and you're as good as on the team whenever you want to be. He says, letter or no letter, you're probably one of the best swimmers in the school."

"Oh, say"—it was Jack's turn to grow scarlet—"you must have laid it on pretty thick!"

"No, I didn't. He says there are mighty few who can make any sort of a show at saving people from drowning, and what you did in that current was worthy of any man. And how's your arm?"

"It feels fine. I guess that cold bath did it good."

"Well, he says to go easy with it and don't put it out again, because we're sure to have that open-air meet, and if we do Clark says you'll be the big man in it. It won't be hard to get your C then. There will be a whole week of it, beginning on class-day, and you'll have a cinch winning three races in a week. You've *got* to do it."

"I have the endurance," said Jack, doubtfully, "but how about my speed?"

THE LAUREL

"Clark says he can fix that up with a little training. He says you lift your arm too far out of the water, and that wastes the time. You want a quicker stroke, something like this—see" Cartwright demonstrated, to the annoyance of a passing student, whose books were promptly scattered all over the floor.

Though Jack did his best not to think too much about it, fearing that this, too, would be bound to end in disappointment, yet he could not keep from feeling happy and encouraged. He mentioned it to Edith as lightly as possible.

"Say, Edie, I may get on the swimming team, to-morrow," he said, casually, over the top of a book he was studying.

"How do you mean?" asked Edith.

"Clark says I have endurance, and they need me for long races when they hold the meet in the lake in June."

"Are you going to join?"

"Shall I?"

To his amazement, Edie hesitated.

"I suppose that means you'll have a chance of gaining your letter again, won't it?" she asked.

Jack nodded.

"It lasts a week. If I can't win my C with a week's steady trying I don't deserve it."

THE GREEN C

He felt an extraordinary excitement clutching him, and rose, stretching his young muscles quiveringly.

Eddie's eyes did not respond to the light in his.

"Jack," she said, solemnly, "I see so well where this is going to land you. Ever since you gave up trying to get that silly letter you have been working properly at your school stuff. If you had wanted the letter so badly you would have taken it when they offered it to you. I guess you can live another year without it. Do you want to lose your kodak now?"

"Aw, bless!" Jack flung himself into his chair. "Of course I want the kodak; but I wouldn't graft the kind I'd really like to get just for a few B's on a report-card. I'll tell you a secret, Eddie, now that it can't possibly happen; I was trying for an honor-card."

"You were?" Eddie was girl enough to find this much finer and worthier than a hundred high-school letters.

"But don't get excited," interposed Jack, a little sorry he had stirred her up like this. "I've worked it all out, and it can't possibly be done. I'll be glad to get through without conditions."

THE LAUREL

"That's the old letter again," burst out Edie, impatiently. "I do wish you could forget it. Just think of the kodak. Why, if you had an honor-card you could ask for the biggest and finest in the world!"

"I can't do both," said Jack, decisively.

"No, indeed," said Edie. "I'm glad you see it that way, at least, Jackie."

"And I'm not going to give up the chance of getting my letter again."

After he had swum the length of the pool several times under Clark's direction the next day, and had heard Clark's guarded but encouraging comments on the performance, this resolution became fixed. After all, he said to himself, here was a last chance miraculously offered to him. What was a kodak in comparison with the right to wear the enviable style sweater Miskell and Cartwright had not hesitated to adopt, once they had the right?

"Then you think I have a good chance to make my C this way?" Jack felt he owed it to Edie to make sure before his final decision.

"Yes, if you work hard and your arm holds out. Try to swim a little more every day. But begin with very short courses, so that you won't overdo it. As soon as you can, go in for outdoor work," Clark had answered.

THE GREEN C

When Jack went home and told Edie how he intended to practise, she almost wept. She pleaded with him in behalf of his lessons in vain.

"My marks will pull me through," he kept declaring. "Thanks to you and some solid work, I have something to stand on. I'm not likely to flunk in anything."

"But, Jack, if you could make yourself safe with just that little bit of study, think how easy it would be to get an honor-card! But even if you don't want to try for that," she added, hastily, catching the contemptuous look he cast her, "don't give up your B now. Why, if I were you I'd be ashamed not to get the kodak, when I'd once made up my mind I would."

"I'll save up and buy myself one next year. My little one will do for now."

"It's not that; it's the principle of the thing, Jackie. You said you were going to win it."

"I said, long before that, I was going to win my letter," retorted Jack.

"Oh, Jackie!"

"Edie, you make me sore. I am not going to flunk, I tell you, and I'm not going to give up my C now for anything. I've just missed it too often, and if all my lessons had to go

THE LAUREL

to smash from this minute, to smash they'd go. I'm going to trot for two hours every day to improve my wind, till it's warm enough to swim in the lake. I'll do my lessons at night—if *I'm not too tired*," he finished, fiendishly.

"Oh, Jackie!" Edie was really crying now.

"Here, what's all this?" Emily entered the room with a large, brown package in her arms. "What are you teasing Edie about, now?"

"Nothing," answered Edie, loyally, wiping her eyes and turning away.

"She's mad because she doesn't want me to make my C," said Jack, sullenly.

"It's not that, and you know it," burst out Edie. "I just want you to do your lessons right and earn your kodak."

"Well, Edie," said Emily, calmly, "I fear you are wasting a lot of good tears. You didn't ever suppose he had a chance in the world to get that kodak, did you?"

"I had a mighty good chance," declared Jack, indignantly.

"He could have been an honor student," added Edie.

"Stop dreaming and open this. Some one is sending you an infernal machine to prevent your cornering all the honors in the school.

THE GREEN C

It's from New York." Emily handed him the brown parcel.

"What is it?" asked Jack, astonished.

"Oh, don't open it, Jackie!" Edie edged toward the door.

"When did it come?" inquired Jack.

"Just a few minutes ago, by express. Well, that's good! You're afraid to open it!" jeered Emily, whose curiosity was getting the better of her.

Jack took out his knife and cut the strings hastily, and with rather nervous fingers undid the innumerable wrappings, while Edie continued to move farther and farther out of what she considered the danger-zone.

"Great Scott!" breathed Jack, at last. "Will you look what it is!"

"Oh, look out!" screamed Edie, disappearing entirely at the sight of the oblong black box.

Jack's excited laugh followed, and reassured her, so that she got up enough courage to look in at the door.

"What is it?" she asked, timidly.

"Oh, Edie," exclaimed Jack, in high glee, "it's something that's going to make you ripping! Ha, ha, Emily! you said I'd never get one in a hundred years, and look—I don't have to study any more! It's a kodak

THE LAUREL

—and what a peach!" He commenced tugging and pulling at it to open it with no thought of anything else.

"Who sent it?" demanded Emily. "Look, there's some stuff there you haven't opened. See if there isn't a note or a card somewhere."

"It's from father, of course," answered Jack. "I guess he ordered it in New York, and it came too soon. You'll get it, Em, for giving it to me before I won it!" Jack giggled again. "Gee, I never would have had the nerve to ask for a folding kodak like this! It's a four by five! Oh, say, what pictures I can get! What's this?" He opened a second box with a dozen rolls of films in it. "Oh—whee!" he whistled, "this will keep me all summer! Gosh, but dad was blowing himself! Ladies, we must be waxing wealthy in this house!"

"Father never sent that," declared Emily, positively.

"Oh, Jack," interposed Edie, tremulously, "are you perfectly sure it's a kodak?"

Emily pounced upon the pile of papers and searched skilfully while Jack still busied himself with all the depressions in the black-leather case, frantically endeavoring to open it.

"Here's a booklet," declared Emily, fish-

THE GREEN C

ing one out. "That will show you how it works."

"Thanks." Jack hunted up his own model, and, when he found it, raised a howl of awe and amazement at its cost. Edie, convinced at last that the gift was harmless, came into the room to help him admire it. Meanwhile Emily discovered the note.

"Look!" she said. "Open this! It's not father's handwriting."

Jack reluctantly put down the kodak and opened the note.

"'Dear John Downing,'" he read.

"Who's it from?" demanded Emily.

"Give me time to read it," replied Jack, indignantly.

"You could look at the signature without reading it all through," said Emily. "You're a brilliant child."

Jack was puzzling at a name.

"Cartwright," he said, at last, greatly puzzled; "but that's not Cartwright's writing."

Edie, who found it hard to get over her doubts, made for the door again at so suspicious a discovery.

"It might be his father, stupid," suggested Emily. "What does he say?"

"'Dear John Downing,'" repeated Jack.

THE LAUREL

"Gee, he writes almost as funny as Professor Marshfield. 'Dear John Downing—'"

"That's three times," reckoned Emily, sarcastically. "He seems to be pretty affectionate."

"You're interrupting all the time. Let's see. 'Dear—'" Jack stopped short.

"Give it to me." Emily took it and started to read with better-trained eyes. "'Dear John Downing.'" Jack and Edie exchanged glances. "'It would be impossible for us to express adequately our consciousness of the debt we owe you, or to show in any way our appreciation of what you have done for us. To endeavor to make known one's true gratitude in a matter so unparalleled as the saving of a life—'"

"I bet Cartwright's brother wrote that," broke in Jack, irreverently.

Emily gave him a look entirely out of keeping with the praise she then proceeded to shower upon him from the pen of another.

"—As the saving of a life, is to attempt the impossible. No, your own knowledge of having done nobly must be your only true recompense.

"Yet neither Mrs. Cartwright, Charles, nor myself feel we can permit time to go by without letting you know in some way that we

THE GREEN C

are sensible of what your courage, skill, and promptness meant to us, when you were so ready to sacrifice your own life for that of a comrade. Therefore, my dear young friend, we beg you to accept this very slight offering from those who must continually regard the preserver of their son as nothing less than a hero.

““N. F. Thompson, the optician in town, has an order from me to supply you with the necessary pans, dishes, and fluids, etc., for the developing and printing of your pictures. He will let you have them whenever you choose to go for them, which, I suppose, will be upon the receipt of this package. I hope the necessity of sending to New York for the desired size kodak does not delay its arrival too much.

““With renewed gratitude and appreciation from Mrs. Cartwright, Charles, and myself, permit me to inscribe myself most proudly and cordially,

““Your friend,

““HORACE M. CARTWRIGHT.””

“Oh, Jackie,” breathed the repentant Edie. “Here I’ve been scolding you and bothering you! I forgot so soon!”

“A very nice letter,” said Emily. “Mr.

THE LAUREL

Cartwright has good literary style. Now show this to mother as soon as she comes in, and then put it away, and take care of it. Some day when you're a man you'll find it more valuable than the kodak."

"I'll keep it where I can use it—where I can haul it out any time you forget what a hero your brother is," teased Jack, to hide his sheepish pleasure in this fulsome encomium. "Want to come down with me to Thompson's, Edie, and get the rest of the junk? We can take pictures on the way."

"Write your thank-you letter first," advised Emily.

"Not a bit of it. Not till I find out just how much I've got to thank them for," returned Jack, to shock her.

"Jack!" exclaimed Emily, thunderstruck at his shamelessness. "If you suppose such talk amusing, you are mistaken. You have not an ounce of delicacy, and that beautiful letter is utterly wasted on you! You don't begin to realize what it means."

"It means I have the kodak," grinned Jack. "Oh you Edie! What will you do now to make me study, hey?"

Edie silently shook her head. She felt she had no right to dictate to one so wise and virtuous.

THE GREEN C

The next afternoon Edie was somewhat surprised to find Jack doubled up over a book in the library.

"Hello," she greeted; "reading up photography?"

"Nope."

"What? A chemistry revival on account of the kodak?"

"Nope."

"What, then?"

Jack held up the book for her to see.

"Latin! Your lessons!"

"You've guessed it."

"Have you flunked in anything?" Edith looked scared.

"Nope."

"Aren't you on the team any more?"

"You bet I am! But there's no chance to practise in weather like this."

"But you're studying!"

"Say, you act as if you thought I wasn't able to." Jack looked annoyed.

"But—I thought—you said—" Edie stammered painfully. "Aren't you trying for your C?"

"I sure am!"

"You can get it and study, too?"

"I'm going to. I'm going to get a B and a C," declared Jack.

THE LAUREL

"But you said—you said now that you have the kodak—you—you didn't need—"

"Well, I'm hanged!" Jack stared at her. "You thought I was that kind? Well, I'll explain carefully, and see if you'll understand. Now that I have the kodak, I've a sort of feeling that I've got to get the B to pay for it."

"But you didn't get it for that." Edie was bewildered.

"That's so. Funny, isn't it?" Jack's queer smile was incomprehensible to Edie. "I'll probably die of brain-fever over it, too." He continued to look at her quizzically, and began humming something, of which Edie caught a few puzzling words like "laurel" and "quarry" and "chase." In the midst of it he broke off, catching Edie's tragic gaze.

"Cheer up, Edie!" he laughed, genially. "I promise not to try for an honor-card, anyhow!"

XX

THE RACE

“DON’T forget,” said Clark, “to keep your arm well down. And don’t lose your head. Remember that they haven’t a chance in the world against you with the wind you’ve got. Take it easy, and don’t get excited. Don’t lame your arm. It’s lungs in this race, remember, and you’ve got ’em.”

“Yes, sir,” answered Jack, steadily.

“And say,” whispered Cartwright, who was standing near by. “Just think of this.” He touched the great green C on his sweater. Jack grinned and nodded.

Think of it! The thought that this last race of the season was to prove whether or not he was to wear that coveted letter this summer was not likely to fade from his mind now! His two other victories had come a little harder than he had anticipated, since, in his excitement in the first race, he had strained his arm slightly. Clark had been most particular about his swimming, and had

THE RACE

only permitted him to enter the three races necessary to the gaining of his C. This was the last of the whole meet, a course half a mile long, from the boat-house to the end of the lake and back. Jack was to be pitted against two Hedgeley students, a junior and a senior, a senior from Newton, and a freshman from Danbury.

The open-air meet had been most successful in drawing students from other high schools into competition, and the whole affair had created unlooked-for excitement and interest throughout the town. The lake to-day was lined with people and boats, and gay with flags and holiday hats and dresses. As Jack made his way from the Cleveland quarters to the float, from which the races were to start, he had the thrilling experience of hearing his name coupled with cheers, showing that people remembered the "little Cleveland freshie" who had won out in two former races.

He stripped off his blank white sweater, and at the word lined up with the four others on the edge of the float.

The shot was fired.

Clark had taught Jack to dive cleanly and not too deep. He had a good start, and proceeded to swim on easily and steadily. He saw the Danbury freshman surge ahead im-

THE GREEN C

mediately, with the Newton senior and one of the Hedgeley men close behind. The other senior was abreast him and gaining a little.

In another five minutes Jack had dropped completely behind the field, and the Danbury boy was so far in advance that he could no longer even see him. Jack's heart sank. It was all very well for Clark to tell him to take it easy and not to lose his head. His long, quiet stroke could hardly help him against the swimmers in the present race. He quickened his pace until he found himself within a foot or two of the last man, then fought against and conquered a panicky desire to cast all Clark's advice to the winds and use up his energy in striving for speed. He was a full fifty yards behind the first to swim around the red buoy that marked the quarter mile. It was the Danbury freshman who, spurred on by the cheering of the delighted crowds, was rapidly losing his head. When Jack crossed him he was already breathing with extreme difficulty. Ten yards behind this foolishly ambitious youngster came the Hedgeley senior rapidly diminishing the distance between them with his quick, short, powerful stroke. The Newton senior and the Hedgeley junior followed, and apparently indulged in a private contest of their own as

THE RACE

they advanced, with first one and then the other taking the lead. Last of all came Jack with his long, dogged stroke that to the on-lookers seemed the essence of hopelessness. Suddenly, after he had passed the buoy, Jack discovered that the oscillating junior and senior had commenced to look upon him as another entry in their little race. New fire kindled within him. He looked ahead and saw that the Danbury boy was foundering gracelessly, and the Hedgeley senior had overtaken him. At least Jack determined not to be the last in the race.

They were now on the stretch at a point where Clark had always permitted Jack to let out a little extra speed at the expense of his wind. He fixed his eye on the Hedgeley senior way up in the lead, and got down to business.

In another minute he found that the two beside him were exerting themselves in earnest, too, and for a short while the three came down the course in a straight row, so pretty to behold that the spectators burst into enthusiastic cheers at the sight. In this manner they swept past the poor Danbury boy, who had exhausted himself completely; then slowly the even line bent outward at the edge as the Newton senior forged ahead. In an in-

THE GREEN C

stant Jack had caught up with him, and now, with ever-increasing speed, Jack and the Newton senior had it out between them. They bore down, gaining slowly but surely, upon the Hedgeley senior in front of them.

Jack's pulse leaped. He had thought that he had had no chance at all, and here, at least, was the opportunity to come in second. He set his jaw firmly.

The Newton boy quickened his pace. He made another spurt. Jack was not to be shaken off.

The leader was scarcely five yards in advance. Jack saw him glance back, and then strike out more rapidly. Jack drew a deep breath and made four swift, telling strokes that placed him second in the little group of three. The float was not fifty yards away.

The shouts of the watching crowds became continuous. The Hedgeley senior cast another startled look astern and—missed a stroke! Jack forged ahead. He could not tell whether the noise he heard was the cheering of the people or the blood roaring in his own ears. His eyes swam. Things became indistinct. He was in the lead!

The yelling grew louder. He felt some one right behind him—beside him. He heard a

THE RACE

deep, guttural sob as the Newton senior leaped ahead.

The float was scarcely twenty yards away. Dimly he heard his own name called and taken up by voice after voice all around the lake. The Newton senior was still in the lead.

Jack was breathing hoarsely, and with great stress. His arms felt heavy and wooden as he put all his power and will into that last spurt. Inch by inch he gained, not daring to look at the float. The senior's face was pale and drawn with the strain, and he was swimming in spasmodic jumps. Jack's stroke was still instinctively regular, though he had shortened it to half its ordinary length. From the shore it looked so ridiculously even and business-like in comparison with the senior's wild struggling that those who witnessed it were unable to keep from bursting into nervous laughter and applause. The sound of this was the last thing Jack heard when the shadow of the float came into view. He put all his nerve and all his energy into that final leap.

Clark dragged him out.

He saw them haul up the senior beside him, and his only clear thought throughout the din that seemed instantly to close in all

THE GREEN C

around him was wonder at the limpness and pallor of his adversary.

"Did—did—I win?" he heard himself pant, as a matter of secondary interest.

Vaguely he saw a thin flutter of green and white go the round of the lake.

"Good boy! Good boy!" chortled Clark, incoherently. Something black dropped down upon Jack from the skies, and he struggled against it in vain, and felt many hands pulling at him, and a voice shouting irrelevantly through all the racket: "Put your arms through! Put your arms in! Stick your arms up straight or you'll be smothered!"

"Oh!" He had forgotten the necessary guarding against cold. They were only putting on his sweater for him.

As soon as he emerged into the light of day he heard the yells and cries renewed, and realized that they were mingled with delighted laughter and cheers. Bub Stanton had him by one arm, and Graham by the other, and between them they swung him high upon their shoulders and marched him toward the dressing-room to the triumphant shouting of the Cleveland yell.

Jack dizzily beheld faces staring up at him, flushed and smiling faces he did not know, among which were mingled many as

THE RACE

familiar as Cartwright's, Miskell's, or Edie's—he was sure he saw several Edies. All looked friendly and proud and happy, and all had open mouths forming his name: "Downing! Yea, Downing! Oh you freshie, Downing! Now, for Kid Downing, let her go!"

They got him to the dressing-room at last, and Bub and Graham set up an extraordinary cry for mirrors—two mirrors.

"We—must—have—two!" they kept howling, in chorus.

Two little eight-inch affairs were produced at last, and Bub held one in front of Jack, while Graham held one behind. He stood trembling and giggling, wondering in what new way they were about to express their feelings now.

"Look!" cried Bub to Jack, above the clamor of the students who crowded about. "Can you see it? Do you see anything?"

A cry for silence arose and "Hush!" was magically passed from mouth to mouth as Jack vainly tried to get any sort of image in the frantically moving glasses.

"We put it on you back to front," explained Graham.

"It was to have surprised you when you looked down and saw it. Do you see it yet?" Bub jumped around excitedly, which did not

THE GREEN C

improve Jack's chance of catching sight of anything in the mirror he held.

"The Cartwrights gave it to you. They told us to get it on you as soon as you had the right to wear it, and we went and made a mess of it," said Graham. "Can't you see *anything?*"

Jack's imagination served him better than his eyes. He felt his knee-joints suddenly slacken and grow weak. His heart seemed to swell almost to bursting, and a horrible desire to cry seized him by the throat.

"Is—is—it?" he choked.

"Yes!" screamed Cartwright, dancing around in his ecstasy. "Let him take it off and look at it. Come on, help peel it off!"

In a moment this was done, and there was a general lull as they spread the white sweater out, unheeding the dampness of the dirty board floor.

It was the largest and brightest green C Jack had ever seen; but that may have been due to the sunlight and the magnifying mist in his eyes.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024651599 *